

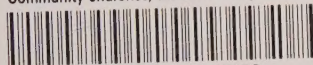
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Community Churches

Community Churches

The Community Church Movement

By
DAVID R. PIPER



Chicago
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FOREWORD

THIS book is the result of study and research extending over a period of seven years. The purpose is to present the facts about community churches and the community church movement for the whole United States, as they have never before been presented; to study the movement in the background of the forces which gave rise to it; to interpret its significance; and to describe and evaluate the best and most typical forms of organization, community relationships, and varied activities of community churches.

This volume is therefore both factual and interpretative. It should be of equal value to pastors and lay leaders in community churches, groups and individuals wishing to reorganize the religious life of their communities on a community basis, and students who desire information concerning a movement which has been called the most significant religious phenomenon of the present day in America.

The author is responsible for most of the material in this book and for the form in which it appears. He has felt it desirable, however, to call upon a number of specialists for certain types of material.

In particular he gratefully acknowledges his indebtedness to Dr. John A. McGaughey, field organizer of the Community Church Workers, for a portion of the material appearing in chapter four; to

Rev. Gilbert E. Counts of the Federated Church, Chagrin Falls, Ohio, and Dr. J. W. F. Davies of Winnetka, Illinois, for material used in the chapter on Programs of Recreation; and to Dr. E. Tallmadge Root, executive secretary of the Massachusetts Federation of Churches, for his interpretation of the relation which should exist between community churches and the State Federation (Chapter 9).

Rev. W. A. Cutler and Rev. M. W. VanTassell furnished some of the material for Appendix I.

Grateful acknowledgement is made to Miss Elizabeth R. Hooker and the Institute of Social and Religious Research for permission to quote several brief excerpts from Miss Hooker's study of "United Churches," and to a host of ministers of community churches whose cooperation in furnishing data, answering questionnaires, and giving interviews has made this work possible.

The book was edited by a committee of three, consisting of Orvis F. Jordan, Samuel R. Guard and the author. The manuscript has been further considered and approved by a group of representative community church pastors and laymen.

DAVID R. PIPER.

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I

THE SPREAD OF A NEW MOVEMENT

The development of the community church as a self-conscious movement in American religious life is a new phenomenon. For years we have had "union" churches, notably in New England. For years also independent churches have occasionally sprung up in new settlements of the West. But their number was not great, and they were regarded as dubious experiments or as temporary expedients to meet abnormal conditions. It now appears, however, that such churches represented the sporadic stages of what in the past ten years has developed into a definite, country-wide movement of large significance, which is widely believed to constitute the next step in the evolution of religious organization.

Since 1915 strong trends toward the community organization of religion have been developing in the Eastern, Central, and Western States. To a slowly increasing extent the movement is also being felt in the South, and spreading more rapidly through the Southwest. The movement is therefore unrestricted as to geographical area. It is also unrestricted as to the character of the community it enters. Although the community church seems best adapted to the overchurched village, it is found successfully operating among almost every conceivable class of people—

in the open country, in towns made up largely of retired farmers, and in mining districts, city suburbs, among the mountaineers, and even among foreigners.

In a general way the rapidity of the spread of this movement may be indicated by statistics gathered at different periods by the author. When the first Handbook of the Community Church Movement was issued, in 1922, it was estimated, on the basis of the most complete data then available, that on June 1 of that year there were 831 community churches in the United States, including denominational, undenominational, and federated types.¹ Of this number, however, only 713 had been definitely located. In April, 1926, this list of churches had grown to 1170 addresses, and in April, 1927, the total was 1296. While a considerable number of churches were discovered which had been in existence for some years, a large proportion of the additions represent new churches organized since 1922.

The community church movement is at present dominantly rural. Of the 1296 churches, 1066 are in villages of 2500 population or less, or in the open country. Of the remainder, 114 are in towns of 2500 to 25,000, and 116 are in cities of more than 25,000.

That more than 82 percent of community churches are rural is a significant fact. Almost as significant is it that 194 of these 1066 rural churches have R. F. D. addresses. This means that they are in the open country

¹See Chapter III for a detailed description of the various types of community churches.

or in off-the-railroad hamlets having no postoffice—more community churches than in towns of 2500 to 25,000, or in cities of more than 25,000 including suburbs.

On the other hand, it is among these R. F. D. churches that we should probably have to cull out the largest percentage, if we were to enforce a rigid test; for a smaller proportion of them than of village and city churches have both a community program and community membership features adequately developed.

The bulk of community churches, 872 or slightly more than 67 percent, are in villages of 250 to 2500 population.

Special factors have encouraged the spread of the movement in villages. Denominational comity and interdenominational agreements have not protected the village from overchurching and its evils; while they have to some extent operated favorably in cities. The growth of smaller cities has given the competing churches new material to keep up their strength and continue their separate and divided witness to the world of the one Lord and one Gospel. The spread of modern church ideals, and the growing popularity of social and religious education programs, have operated to draw village churches together, that they might do unitedly what none of them could do separately. The agricultural crisis, causing financial stringency, has helped. This has affected the rural villages as well as the farmers.

The tightening of the denominational hand has squeezed some of the rural churches out of it, instead of forcing them into line. It is sometimes said that a church federates or becomes non-denominational to avoid paying missionary assessments. This is less true than to say that the step was taken because the rural districts are democratic and will not endure the pressure of oligarchical methods of fixing budgets and extracting funds. They feel that this is America, where community self-determination should prevail. They also become unwilling to dedicate money to a board which has offered or tried to put dedicated money into their community to prolong a condition which had become insufferable.

Business men in our villages are of larger caliber than they used to be. They are more community-minded. In a large minority, perhaps a majority, of instances they have led the local community church movement. They have begun to think about organized religion, and not depend upon the "men of the cloth" to do all the thinking for them. They have seen the good business of a united going church, and the poor advertisement which several little self-centered dying churches give to a town.

We hope the women will have full credit in the community church movement. In most villages they have been prominent in effecting the union of forces; in some places women have initiated and led. Their motive has not been economic or practical, but spiritual. They have seen the childhood and youth

of the village neglected by an organized Christianity serving a sectarian order, but overlooking the needs of Homeburg. Instead of a city-made program handed down to keep the denomination up, they have determined to have a community program lifted up to keep local evils down.

Beneath it all, however, is the penetration into rural America of a new idea of the church and its mission, a new idea of what organized religion is for, perhaps even a new conception of Christianity. The term "Kingdom of God" has been translated into the language of democracy. It stands for a righteous community life in which Christian love and unity shall now find expression.

Most of the community churches in towns of 2500 to 25,000 are of the federated type. Sometimes they are not the only churches in the community. There may be foreign language congregations, or a large Roman Catholic or Southern Baptist element, or the remnant of a denominational group which held out or was kept out when the main portion of the congregation entered the merger. Or, there may be a holiness group having garments too sacred to be touched by any who are not the recipients of special grace. Sometimes the town or small city church represents a spiritually inclusive element who wish to interpret Christianity as the big thing it is, and who come together partly in protest against the theologically exclusive spirit shown by a local aggregation of rigidly sectarian churches. The attempt then is made to

render a community-wide service during the week, maintain community membership ideals, and strive gradually to broaden the spirit of other elements in the community life. In some instances Protestant American groups have merged because they found themselves individually too weak to carry on, situated as they were in communities predominantly foreign-speaking or Roman Catholic, or both. In some other instances the church began at the beginning of the town's life, as a community organization, and has grown with it.

Of the 116 city churches, 69 are suburban. There are a few large independent churches, usually in down-town locations. The community ideal is part and parcel of their message. Their community program is largely one of cooperation with other community-serving agencies, with which the cities are well supplied. Some of them are doing much to give an interracial and international interpretation to the community ideal.

When we consider that from a few scattered union and federated churches, and possibly one or two denominational community churches, known to exist in 1917, the numbers have grown in ten years to 1296—an increase of more than 1100 percent; and when we consider that even on this conservative estimate there are more community churches than there are Friends churches of all kinds in America, and more than the total number of Unitarian and Universalist churches combined, we see that, considered

as a group, the community churches are beginning to take no mean place in the religious life of America. When again we note that the growth of the movement, with the exception of one or two years, has witnessed a steady, normal annual increase, we perceive that there is here a movement which has none of the marks of the ephemeral, and which represents therefore a steadily growing conviction concerning religious reorganization.

When we consider that in 1917 the term "community church" was practically unknown, and that today it is in common use in newspapers, magazines, books, the agricultural press, on the air, and is even brought into virulent editorials of the most conservative sectarian weeklies, we have a measure still more significant by which to gauge the spread of this movement.

II

COMMUNITY CHURCH BACKGROUNDS

The two competing churches of a Massachusetts village were united by a stroke of lightning. The electric charge set fire to one of the houses of worship, leaving the congregation homeless. Invited to share the facilities of their competitors until they could rebuild their own edifice, these people discovered the joys and advantages of unity. The two congregations formed a permanent federation and the destroyed church was never rebuilt. Fires and windstorms and other forms of apparent disaster have been among the exciting causes of the formation of community churches in old-settled districts. In newly established communities such considerations as scattered population, poverty, scarcity of ministers, and in particular the fewness of numbers adhering to any one sect, have exerted a deciding influence. One of the earliest examples of this situation is to be found in the story of an Iowa church, which was organized in 1887, as told in the printed history of the congregation:

“The real beginnings of the Union church of ----- sprang from the religious need of the new prairie country. Scotch-Irish immigrants from Canada, together with people from New England, the Western Re-

serve, as well as Great Britain and other parts of the world, would come together in the schoolhouses, hold Sunday-school and have such preaching services as could be secured, until the need and desire grew for an organization. But under what name? What denomination? For the various denominations were represented among these early settlers. This 'burning' question was settled in a true catholic spirit and the 'Union Church' was the result."

Many instances are on record of undenominational churches having grown out of union Sunday-schools planted in the earlier days of the community life. In more recent years community houses have begun to feature as the forerunners of community churches. In a little Ohio village a small denominational church struggled along at a dying rate for years, until the people conceived the need of a recreation center. A community house was built. As a result of the cordial sentiment developed, the demand grew for the broadening of the religious fellowship. The demand was met and the church became a community institution.

In a few instances, the interdenominational appeal of a large Bible class has resulted in the union of competing churches. The pastor of a federated church in an Illinois village wrote to the author as follows:

"A little over a year ago a Community Men's Bible Class was organized. At that

time the town had two churches, the Methodist Episcopal and United Presbyterian. After a few months the Bible class caught a vision of a program whereby the two churches might be united . . . and at length proceeded to draw up by-laws for a federated church."

In rural communities the broadening or conversion of a denominational church has sometimes resulted from the activities of a neighborhood club. This was the case in an Indiana open country community, where a Brethren church, largely through the influence of a community circle, was converted into an undenominational organization and the competing Sunday-schools of the community were united under its auspices. A rural parent-teacher association has reopened an abandoned church, set up a community Sunday-school, and made plans looking toward a community church organization.

The people of some overchurched communities have been brought together as a result of union evangelistic services; and there are a few instances on record of small but influential groups bringing into the community an evangelist of Christian unity, who successfully combined the usual evangelistic message with a community message. One of the first undenominational community churches in Missouri was organized in this way.

Sometimes thoughtful leaders are awakened by the vision of a more able pulpit ministry than has been

possible with divided support. The following paragraph is from the story of a Colorado church:

“When in early June of 1915 the Rev. E. Burns Martin, pastor of the Methodist church at Paonia, Colo., delivered several addresses in connection with the closing of the schools, a few men and women went away from the exercises with a vision and a desire. Here was a minister who touched the real, vital, present things with choice and pleasing language. Would it be feasible to cut all connections with denominationalism, form an independent church and call this minister that seemed able to secure a more general hearing for the Gospel? . . . Twelve men were invited to consider the plan. Eleven of them were willing to devote themselves to the new enterprise. The Methodist and Congregational churches were persuaded to merge their organizations and form an independent church. Presbyterians, Christians, Lutherans and others joined heartily in the new enterprise.”

There is at least one instance of a chamber of commerce whose members jointly considered the futility of church competition, and the economic and social waste involved, gathered the facts and brought them before a called meeting of the citizens, proposing a plan for combined religious effort. There are also numerous instances of informal groups of three or

four business men who initiated the movement in their community.

Occasionally the pastor of a denominational church, foreseeing imminent competition, has educated his people by conferences and sermons, and sometimes by tracts, to the idea of a broader membership feature. Thus the church has become a community organization and usually has adopted a more aggressive community program. The pastor of a very conservative liturgical congregation in a Pennsylvania village distributed to every home a leaflet bearing the following message, and was able to reorganize his church to include Protestants of many denominations:

“Why a Community Church is More Desirable
than Several Small Churches Competing
Against Each Other

“There is a better spirit when all the Protestants of a community work together; and more real work is done.

“One large building for worship and a community building can both be built and maintained for less than several small churches.

“The people of a community become better acquainted and are therefore better neighbors and citizens if they meet often at a common center of interest.

“Small churches are limited to ‘the usual services;’ a large church can serve the com-

munity in many ways that require salaried workers besides the pastor. Many a community that supports three or four pastors, janitors, choirs, organists, etc., would get better results if this same money were used to support:

“One pastor (or two if an assistant is needed).

“One choir, one organist (playing a *real* organ).

“One church building, always open and heated, with a caretaker on the premises all the time.

“A church secretary to do the work which robs most pastors of time greatly needed for spiritual leadership.

“A deaconess or visiting nurse, if needed.

“A director of young people’s work—religious and social.”

There are occasional instances of denominational superintendents seeing the need of uniting, and taking the initiative to bring a practical plan for federation or union to the people of the local community.

A far more effective inciting cause, as judged by the number of communities that have been reorganized, is the dissemination of information about successful community churches. Often the more progressive people have become acquainted with a successful united effort in some other community, and, impressed by the practical benefits

obtained, have led the local forces in the organization of a church patterned after the one of which they had heard.

Behind all immediate causes, whether of accident, necessity, or design, which have given rise to individual community churches lies the changing social, economic, and cultural background required to make such a movement possible, and without which the local instances would be few, casual and unrelated. Some of these changes have been at work for a quarter of a century or more. But the war accelerated them and the economic conditions in rural communities following the war have accentuated them.

The idea of a church organization handed down from the apostles ready-made and unchangeable, which used to prevail and which was taught by the ministers of most denominations in almost every village and hamlet in the land, is no longer believed. The vast masses of the people know that the church as an external organization is human, however divine its spiritual charter may be.

Two generations ago clergymen were revered; now, the term "Reverend" as applied to the minister is antiquated. His varied social duties have brought him out of a cloistered existence where his shortcomings may be better observed and he is caught off his dignity. The days of his quasi-authority are over. He is respected if sincere, hard-working, respectable and self-respecting. He is not revered. People are daring to think for themselves, and their thinking is

not theoretical, concerned with the foundations of the church in the apostolic era; it is practical, concerned with the tottering props and bracings of morality and social conduct today. Current indifference to the theological and ecclesiastical aspects of church life is equaled only by interest in the moral and religious aspects of daily life. The age-old Protestant trick—stolen from the Catholics—of crowding Christ into a uniform evokes little sympathy from the manhood of this generation. Where this is still being done from the pulpit, and in the implications of church membership requirements, indifference often gives way to impatience.

The term "Kingdom of God" is no longer identified with a denomination. The country preacher who said of his denomination, "Our church *is* the Kingdom of God in earnest," when confronted by a group of citizens who said they wished to unite the churches for the sake of the Kingdom of God in their village, is an anachronism. People are thinking in terms of the community instead of the group. New modes of action have created new habits of thought. Cooperative enterprises are uniting farmers. Community projects such as chautauquas, public playgrounds, chambers of commerce, have united the leading people of former religious factions in our villages. Consolidated schools and good roads have created larger units of community life and often have shifted to some common center a life which formerly revolved about two or more foci. Old neighborhoods

have not always been broken up, but in addition to the smaller neighborhood community there is a larger community commanding a degree of loyalty and having its subtle sure effect upon the farmer's thinking.

The more sectional religious weeklies still publish such squibs as this, found in *The Central Methodist* (March 18, 1926, page 8): "With churches, like other things, fraternizing without compromising is impossible . . . To illustrate: here is the Baptist church holding a protracted meeting in a Methodist community. Can the Methodists attend that meeting and pray for its success without compromising?" But even in backward, out-of-the-way Southern communities, such as the one this weekly "serves," one finds people who have grown far beyond the editor's or his contributor's conception of religion. As this manuscript was being written a letter came from a farmer living near a tiny Tennessee hamlet, who appears never to have heard of the community church movement, and who has so little education he can scarcely write a letter. Yet from his sixty-five years of sectarianism—as a Baptist—he has rebelled. He is supporting a union movement which has arisen in his out-of-the-way community.

Over against the growing community consciousness in all the other concerns of life, place the continued policy of group-service, the continued winking at if not positive promotion of sectarian rivalry, which the older people in the church, with their older

habits of thought often perpetuate gladly and even conscientiously with ministerial encouragement. The picture of conditions, as found in about sixty Texas communities surveyed by Professor R. Clyde White of the Texas A. and M. College, might be duplicated in hundreds of small communities in states much farther north:

"In no community in Texas of which the writer has any knowledge has rural preaching decreased the sectarian rivalry and promoted constructive cooperation; in very few has it stood for a positive organization of community recreation of a wholesome sort; rarely has the preacher dared to learn and teach the truth about race relations in his community; they preach on visiting the sick, feeding the hungry and ministering to the needy, but as an organized group a rural church does not minister to the needy nor give any attention to creating a social idealism that will issue in economic organization to feed the hungry nor does it stand for the prevention of ill health and the spread of simple ideas of sanitation. The people are fed the theological husks of the Gospel and receive none of the life-giving kernels which vitalized the teachings of Jesus among the artisans and farmers of ancient Palestine."¹

At the time when the leading citizens of almost every community are thinking in terms of community welfare and planning for better schools, better sanitation, better recreation facilities, and at least hoping

¹*The Presbyterian Advance*, December 17, 1925.

for more effective religious education and worship, the denominations are sending to those communities mere preachers, who come in by rail or by automobile on Saturday night or Sunday morning, and leave on Sunday night or Monday morning, unless detained by committee meetings or funerals. Their leadership in the religious and moral life of the community is nil. Such ministers do not often possess the qualities of community leadership; those who do possess it rarely find an opportunity for its exercise, because under such conditions the minister himself is virtually a divided personality. Having through long habit divided his time and energies between several communities, he is unable to become closely acquainted with the problems of any or to think in terms larger than those of the group he is especially called to serve.

Service has literally evaporated into a preachment in many churches of the old order. People are justified in calling any church sectarian which divides the community instead of uniting it, no matter how broad its creedal position may be.

The new habits of thought cannot live complacently alongside these old habits of organization and service (or dis-service) rendered by the traditional church organization. This sectarian irritant has aroused the growing spirit of self-determination in community life, giving rise to the spread of religious democracy, and to the tendency on the part of citizens outside the church to do something more than

assume an indifferent or cynical attitude. The fact that church properties are bought and paid for by the people of a community, but legally owned by outside organizations, has given a tremendous advantage to those who wish to oppose all get-together movements. But this fact has also, in many instances, stirred the honest feelings of the local people to a determination to govern their own affairs and own their own property, whether for religious or other community purposes. Perhaps it is too much to say that the thought has consciously developed that the church building should be as much a municipal building as the public school; but this is implicit in the plans and actions of hundreds of communities.

The tendency to bring complete self-determination into local religious organizations has been greatly hastened by the feeling that denominationalism tends naturally toward exploitation. The older home missions have largely disappeared. The citizens of today, in the communities where pioneers like Sheldon Jackson planted the first churches, witness the tenacious holding on of denominational groups with the aid of home mission funds, when the divisions thus perpetuated hamstring progress and make possible no service in the community life which could not be better financed and executed without the help of home mission money, provided the Christian people could unite. Denominational home missionaries have recorded from time to time the bitter opposition encountered in new communities of the

Northwest, where citizens have vehemently protested against the establishment of any church by any denominational missionary. The same feeling exists over wide areas elsewhere, though less vociferously expressed.

It has come to this, that if ecclesiasts will not move toward what ought to be, laymen will. In many places they have. They have taken just such steps as they would take in dealing with a similar situation in the business world. Democracy is coming to take the place of dogmacracy. Opposition will not stop it, because all the economic, social and cultural forces of the day are conspiring in its favor.

Add to these forces the growing information about community churches, their achievements, and how to organize them successfully, and the background is complete.

TYPES OF COMMUNITY CHURCHES

WHAT IS A COMMUNITY CHURCH?

In attempting to define the "community church" one is beset with the usual difficulty met in defining any living organism or growing movement. This difficulty is somewhat increased by the fact that community churches have taken many forms. The only method of procedure is the inductive. In making use of this method, studying all forms in which the idea has found expression, two facts emerge. First, that the community churches of all types represent the attempt of the people of hundreds of communities to apply the principles of democracy and the spirit of unity to religious organization; second, that in doing this they have found it necessary to break down or reach across old sectarian lines of cleavage which in the past have divided Christian people in the same community. In applying the spirit of unity, they have also been compelled to seek a uniting principle outside of creed and ritual.

In overcoming sectarian barriers they have all worked out or worked toward the principle of making the community and not the sect their basis of organization. They have found the people of the community an economic and social unit, and they have sought to make them a religious unit. Hereto-

fore Christians have felt themselves united as Methodists or Baptists, with other Methodists or Baptists in other communities throughout the world, rather than with other Christians in their own community. This unity of people of the same sect the world over the community church does not attempt to tear down except in so far as it hinders the sense of local unity among all Christians. But it does build up and make stronger than the sectarian bonds the feeling of the essential unity of all Christians in the same community. Thus it brings them into one fellowship of worship and service, and into one working congregation.

The community church also is organized upon a new principle of cohesion. The denominational group holds its members together in the unity of a common theological belief or tradition; the community church substitutes for this a united loyalty to a common spiritual purpose expressing itself in a community program.

The two fundamental features, then, of all community churches are, that they substitute the community for the sect as their primary basis of organization, and purpose for dogma as their principle of cohesion.

Theoretically, the community church is the expression of the composite religious consciousness of the community. In proportion as it actually succeeds in expressing the composite religious life of the community, it is a perfect community church. There

is nothing perfect in this world, and there is no perfect community church. It may be said of all community churches as it may be of all Christians, that they are in the process of becoming rather than of being.

As indicated in chapter 2, there were found to be 1296 community churches in the United States in April, 1927; 441 of these were denominational; 378 undenominational; 436 federated; and the classification of 41 churches was not definitely determined.

THE DENOMINATIONAL TYPE

Judged by the two distinguishing features mentioned above—community basis of organization and purposive principle of cohesion—the denominational type of church may at once be adjudged the least satisfactory. But in some instances it may be the only feasible solution; and in others it may be the type most acceptable to the people.

Any denominational church which has the field to itself may become a community church by broadening its membership basis. This may be done by adding a community, associate, or affiliate membership roll. On this roll are placed the names of all Christians of the community who will fellowship and work with the local congregation, but without change of private belief or denominational allegiance. Such associate or affiliate members should be made eligible to hold any office in the gift of the congregation which does not require the taking of denominational vows. They have full voting privileges on all mat-

ters not affecting the relations of the main body with its denomination. In churches whose form of government places a large measure of responsibility upon an official board for the control of the affairs of the local congregation, it is advisable to have the associate or affiliate members represented by one or more of their number, who will sit on the official board and participate in matters of purely local business.

Denominational community churches have originated in various ways. Some are the result of combining two or more weak denominational units, whose members voted to align themselves with some one denomination as a matter of what they considered good order. The denomination chosen has usually been different from any of those represented in the merger, but not always. Some such mergers have been effected by what is popularly called the exchange of churches. For example, the members of a weak Methodist church may be traded to the Congregationalists in one village, and in exchange the members of a weak Congregational church in another village may be asked to join the local Methodist congregation. Very few arrangements of this kind, outside of one or two New England states, appear to have been highly successful. People resent being swapped like swine.

In still other instances the denominational community church has been established on the ground as the first church of any kind organized in a new community, and sometimes protected in its monopoly

of the field by comity agreements made through the state home missions council. Numbers of such churches are found in the Northwest. Most churches thus formed, however, seem to be merely denominational churches holding the field, and have not adopted a broader community basis of membership. The growth of the community is certain to make this broader basis necessary if the church is to serve as intended and as the people will have a right to expect. Until such a broader basis is adopted the church is not, in form of organization, a community church, although it may call itself such.

Some churches which began as undenominational have voluntarily converted themselves into denominational community churches, usually during a time of temporary discouragement or difficulty; or, under the leadership of a sectarian-minded minister who took advantage of the confidence reposed in him.

An interesting variation of the denominational type is beginning to make itself manifest through what is known as the larger parish plan. The larger parish plan is now a well-known device, and has been definitely adopted by several denominations to meet the needs of certain communities, chiefly in sparsely populated areas. There are also instances of interdenominational larger parishes, combining churches of different denominations which maintain their allegiance but utilize a single ministerial staff and cooperate with each other in the program projected by the staff. When a larger parish is composed of

community churches of the denominational type, it is in effect a federation of denominational community churches. Such a situation is to be found in the Goshen Hole Larger Parish, centering in Lingle, Wyoming. In the associate membership of the churches of this larger parish are included Methodists, Baptists, Lutherans, Episcopalians, United Brethren, Disciples, and people of many other denominations. This makes it in truth a larger community enterprise, and undoubtedly increases the efficiency of all the work done by the specialists in the employ of the churches concerned. All that has ever been lacking in the larger parish plan to make it complete has been the adoption of a community membership basis.

The denominational type may be desirable in communities where a single denominational church exists as a going concern, provided its tenets are those of a large portion of the community. To convert the membership features is often simpler, and the adjustment less complicated, than to undenominationalize the existing congregation. In fact, the latter may prove to be utterly impossible. On the other hand, if the denomination has a closely organized supervision on standardized lines, the relationship may seriously interfere with religious development on a community basis, simply because denominational programs are largely standardized and have not yet to any extent begun to interpret religion on a community-wide basis.

The need of financial assistance sometimes makes it imperative for a church in a small community to broaden its work without giving up denominational connections. This is because the prevailing policy of home mission boards is, not to help people or communities as such, but to assist denominational groups and build denominational prestige.

In places where shifting population makes local leadership uncertain and impermanent, a program imposed by trained denominational leadership may be both desirable and necessary; and the denominational type may be the only kind which will persist in such a situation.

In its initial stages a denominational type church may suffer from suspicion as to motives involved in the broadening of its membership basis. Some citizens may suspect that the added membership feature is a scheme to "get us all into the church" and increase denominational strength, rather than a plan to make a larger community program possible. Others may ask, "Why should not the church be of my denomination rather than yours?" If the answer is that it does not matter which denomination, the reply is obvious: "Then, why should it represent any denomination?" To which an honest answer would probably admit, "to satisfy the preferences of the group now in control."

The objections to the denominational type church are likely to be small or entirely absent in proportion as the community program keeps pace with the en-

largement of membership basis, and as the other elements of the community are recognized by being represented on enlarged local boards, committees, and community service programs.

THE FEDERATED TYPE

In hundreds of towns, villages and rural districts, formerly overchurched, Christian people have tired of the wastefulness of competition and have heard and heeded the "get-together" gospel. They have discovered the solution in such a federation of the local churches as to form a single congregation, having a combined board of control and ministering to the community as one church. Separate membership rolls are kept of the various denominational groups making up the federated church. A federated church which keeps only these denominational membership rolls and which requires all new members to be aligned with one of the denominations officially represented in the federation, is not a full-fledged community church. To be full-fledged it must grant any person desiring to enter into Christian fellowship absolute freedom to retain or to choose his denominational allegiance, or to join the local congregation without assuming any denominational status.

The federated church is possible, of course, only where two or more denominational churches must be combined as a requisite to community organization. A distinction must be made between the value of federation as an initial means of bringing two or more

units together, and its value as a permanent solution. As an initial means this form is often indispensable. The older or more conservative elements may not consent to complete union. If this were attempted they would remain outside. They might continue to carry on. The net result would be to increase the number of churches and still further divide the community. Overhead officials who would actively interfere with any plan to form an undenominational church, or even to combine two churches under the auspices of a third denomination, may consent with more or less willingness to a federated church, since this preserves the denominational unit. The fact that a considerable number of district superintendents or presiding elders derive their incomes from assessments made against the churches which they supervise, brings a strong personal element into such a situation. The self-interest of the official is on the side of the preservation of the denominational unit. In some instances bequests and endowments make it impossible to dissolve existing organizations without considerable financial loss, and when the community is financially weak, and church life largely dependent upon such support, the federated type is the most feasible.

As a permanent solution the federated church can not be said to present as much promise ordinarily as either of the other types, except where its permanence is assured by long-term comity agreements, such as exist between three denominations in Vermont, or

by a strong working state federation of churches whose constituent denominational officials have a settled policy of approving the federated church when conditions make it seem desirable. Such a situation is found in Massachusetts. Miss Hooker's study of "United Churches" (page 58) shows that the reported separations of federated churches equalled 20 percent of the reported combinations effected. But in Massachusetts, under state federation auspices, the percentage of failures is reported to have been considerably less.

Experience seems to show that if officials oppose or hamper, and the people of the community are ready and determined to get together, it is far better to choose one of the other two forms rather than to federate. Even if the officials do not succeed in preventing, they may and sometimes do take advantage of any small problems which arise later, to predict failure and urge their own people to withdraw. Moreover, where there is no state federation to give permanence to a favorable policy, the successors of favorable officials may be unfavorable. Thus a federated church may come into existence with the denominational officials actively aiding it, and in a few years may find itself facing criticism and hostility from one or more of a new set of officials. When, therefore, it is necessary, for other reasons, to federate at the outset, it is advisable to work definitely toward a more perfect form of union as soon as

the temporary difficulties are overcome and the harmonious working of the constituent units makes this possible.

THE UNDENOMINATIONAL TYPE

Udenominal churches have sprung up under a great variety of conditions. Many have resulted as an outgrowth of union Sunday schools planted in new or sparsely settled communities, and in outlying suburban areas. Some have been formed almost simultaneously with the formation of a new community, and with the active support, if not leadership, of the financial interests most intimately connected with its growth. For example, new real estate developments in the areas contiguous to large cities; new industrial developments, lumber mill towns, and summer and winter colonies, have in some instances never had anything but a single undenominational community church fostered at the outset by the entire community.

Some undenominational churches are the outgrowth of old union churches of the days of theological independency. This is particularly the case in New England, but there are scattered instances in the Middle West. They often had a very closely interpreted creed, and set up a theological test as sectarian as that of any denomination. In order to become community churches they have had to add associate membership features similar to those

adopted by the denominational type, or to simplify and restate their creedal requirements.

Numbers of churches that formerly were federated have merged into the undenominational type, for the sake of greater unity and better working efficiency. Some denominational churches, in order to serve the entire community, have become undenominational instead of adopting associate or affiliate membership. In a few such instances a small contingent or group have continued to maintain their denominational allegiance, paying their denominational dues or assessments annually, and contributing to the denominational benevolences as a group, while at the same time holding full membership in the undenominational church.

A few instances are on record of undenominational churches having been formed where it was impossible either to federate or dissolve the two or more competing denominational groups. This was done by setting up an additional organization which all or most of the members of the competing groups joined as individuals. This has particularly been the case when there was overhead interference, or where property rights had to be protected by the legal continuance of a denominational group. The effect of this may be understood if we compare it to what would occur if every Odd Fellow in a village were also a Mason, and if the Masons and Odd Fellows met on the same night, at the same hour, and with the same frequency. If all the Odd Fellows attended

the Masonic lodge every night, the Odd Fellows would automatically cease to function. That is what happens to the denominational groups when the overhead community church is formed. They automatically cease to function but without ceasing to exist.

The undenominational church does not usually have more than one membership roll. But there may be people in the community who are prejudiced against giving up their active denominational allegiance. In joining the community church they may also retain their membership in any denominational church elsewhere, and continue to pay whatever dues or assessments are necessary to maintain good standing. This dual membership feature appears to be growing in popularity.

The undenominational type seems to be indicated for small or financially weak communities, having no organized religious work and having a population representative of many branches of the Christian faith. In such a situation, competing denominational churches are out of the question, and an undenominational church may be the only solution because the people can not agree to unite under auspices of any one denomination. This condition has given rise to perhaps a large minority of the undenominational churches in the smaller communities of America.

A strong community consciousness in a new settlement and a determination that the church shall be a large community factor, contributing to unity and

progress, has made any other type of church but the undenominational impossible in a considerable number of new suburban developments of the highest class. A self-respecting, highly intelligent people, possessed of initiative and leadership, want a self-respecting church, properly representative of their community life and ideals. In such a situation the undenominational church is by all odds the most desirable form. Moreover, in a suburban community the church need not depend for fellowship upon a denominational connection. It has the city council of churches, and various interdenominational social, benevolent, and religious agencies of the larger community's life. It has the advantage of freedom to form a tradition of community loyalty as sacred as any denominational tradition could ever be, and all this need not interfere with the development of its larger world interests.

Many small matters which need careful, tactful adjustment under the other plans are much more easily handled on the undenominational plan, for this brings all factions and groups together on an absolute level. It also enables the people to choose their leadership wholly on the basis of qualifications for the work to be done, instead of having to strike a nice balance between groups. In many communities the undenominational form makes a stronger appeal to unchurched citizens than the federated church can make. In fact, this seems to be one weakness of the federated church, especially when supervised by

denominational officials. Bulletin No. 43 of the Massachusetts Federation of Churches says in regard to this: "In New England, where denominational superintendents form and guide, non-denominational or 'community' members are rare."

The more representative membership of an undenominational church tends to facilitate desirable community relationships, makes easier the path to genuine and close cooperation between the church and other community agencies. This may be partly because the undenominational church feels its complete dependence upon local support, and partly because the undenominational form fosters community consciousness; whereas, the denominational tie keeps alive a spiritual group tradition which may make against or compete with community consciousness.

Stronger local initiative is required to develop the program of an undenominational church, because there is no outside control or supervision, and continuity of work rests wholly upon local leadership.

In some villages and small cities the sectarian sentiment and divisive spirit of the competing churches has been so strong as to make even the loosest form of federation impossible. Yet within these churches there grew up a strong spirit of unity among the younger or more progressive elements, and it came to be felt imperative to do something to counteract the blight on community life caused by the competitive spirit, by setting up forces of togeth-

erness. Such situations have given rise to undenominational churches, which have gathered the more progressive elements out of the membership of the competing churches and added to them, as a rule, a considerable proportion of the hitherto unchurched population. While not actually combining all Christians of the community, such churches usually function on a community basis both as to membership and activities. The community ideals of such churches, however, seem to be in constant peril. They are too likely to become class organizations appealing only to a certain intellectual or liberal type of citizens, unless they initiate and keep alive a genuine community program. It seems particularly true that in the larger centers such churches are in danger of becoming sterile by reason of smugness.

AFFILIATION

In recent years, and particularly due to the financial depression in rural and some mining areas, numbers of undenominational churches have affiliated with the district association (conference, presbytery, etc.) of some denomination. The largest number of such affiliations have been with district associations of the Congregational Church. Several Congregational district associations have amended their constitutions to make provision for this affiliate relationship; and at least one (the Middlesex Union Association, of Massachusetts) extends to federated churches a similar privilege. Affiliation permits the

local church to continue as a community-centered, self-determining body, and at the same time to enter into a definite fellowship for certain forms of assistance which may be needed.

Some churches, formerly denominational, in order to put themselves in a better position to carry out a community program or to offer a broader membership basis, have severed their active relationship and adopted an affiliate relationship with the district body of either their own or some other denomination.

The advantages of affiliation for an undenominational church are, or may be: (a) The possibility of receiving financial help if the church is weak or suffering from a temporary depression, such help being ordinarily denied to a church unless it accepts the denominational yoke of the assisting body; (b) help in securing pastors, and in the case of some denominations the promise of regular pastoral supply; (c) recognition by home missions councils or city federations, and consequent protection from denominational competition.

The possible handicaps in such an arrangement for an undenominational church are: (1) That pastors may be sent to supply it without reference to their community-mindedness, or their training as community leaders, whereas it is now possible for an undenominational church, through agencies set up and competent to serve it, to secure pastors with a community vision, and with experience as community organizers. (2) The possibility that affilia-

tion may be used as a step toward the complete denominationalizing of the church, and the cutting off of its more liberal membership features. This has been done in a number of instances.

The advantages to be gained by a denominational church severing its close connection and assuming affiliate relationship with its own or some other denomination are: (a) Greater freedom to develop a community program on the basis of community needs; (b) greater democracy because of putting the membership basis upon the same terms for all people regardless of denomination. There appear to be no disadvantages.

Affiliation treats the denomination as a service agency from which certain forms of service may be obtained. Usually the church receiving the services agrees to support the benevolence work of the denomination. Essentially, the arrangement is similar to that which might be made with other service agencies.

It is creeds, forms of government, and traditions, which make a denomination. In affiliating, an undenominational church does not subscribe to or adopt any of these three identifying marks of the denomination. Its status as an undenominational church therefore remains unchanged. In dissolving the organic and adopting the affiliate relationship, however, the denominational church does change its status. Formerly it shared the traditions of the denomination, held its form of government and was

amenable to the laws and mandates of its higher bodies or officials. In dissolving the organic relationship it withdraws from these forms of identity and control. It becomes in effect an undenominational church using the denomination as a service agency. This fact may not be fully recognized by either the church or the denominational officials. But it is a fact.

The affiliated church, therefore, is to be classed as an undenominational sub-type, and not as a separate type.

IV

ORGANIZING A COMMUNITY CHURCH

PRINCIPLES

It is one of the underlying convictions of community church people that no particular form of ecclesiastical polity has been ordained of God. Here we find ourselves in striking contrast with the denominational order. Historically speaking, denominational polity is built upon the assumption that God laid down a specific pattern of organization. Each denomination originally believed that its own organization followed that pattern, and that there was Scriptural authority for it as distinguished from all other forms of church organization. Perhaps a large majority of laymen in most of the denominations today would disavow such a belief if they ever heard of it. But the denominational system none the less historically rests upon that belief, and there are some large and influential communions, such as the Southern Baptist, Episcopal, Lutheran, which officially teach that belief today.

By circumscribing one's idea of the church until it is reduced to only such a matter as a mode of baptism, or of ordination, one may argue successfully and teach with some show of reason that the Church has been static throughout history. But to include anything more than these in one's idea is to admit at once that the Church has changed through-

out history. All the dragging weight of authority and tradition has not prevented even the Roman Catholic Church from changing by a slow process of accretion.

It is unnecessary to dwell upon this, or to point out that the Bible and the early church fathers both witness to the fact that there was much variety in apostolic and post-apostolic church organization. We are trying here not to prove but only to state a principle which is clearly recognized in this movement; namely that it is never our aim to introduce a supposedly authoritative and God-given form of organization into a community. On the contrary, we must seek, in organizing a community church, to discover and devise such a form as is best fitted to be the body of the spiritual organism of the community. The community is conceived as, potentially at least, a spiritual organism, and the organization is conceived as the means by which that organism functions.

From this principle we derive one or two corollaries concerning manner and method. As far as possible, the organization must embody, express, and minister to the composite religious consciousness of the community. And by the composite religious consciousness one means those spiritual ideals, purposes, faiths, loves, and hungers, which are held in common by all. To do this requires the greatest democracy of organization consistent with a responsible, working efficiency.

But that is not all. If we are wise, we shall recognize that in this organization, differences of thought, experience and viewpoint are quite as valuable as are agreements. Someone has well said that, "Progress does not depend on the similarity which we find, but on the similarity which we achieve." One man, out of his experience and vision has seen a single segment of the truth, a second has perceived another segment. Neither has contradicted the other; but both have failed, as humans always must fail, to see the whole truth, and to see the truth whole, until the half-truths are used to supplement each other. That explains many of our differences in matters of belief. Life is too short and too circumscribed for any of us to hope for a full measure of spiritual experience. What may seem to you to be my vagaries may be only the results of experiences differing in shade and form from yours, and vice versa. Progress comes from valuing such differences and utilizing them. Let social worship and work be a means of our bringing to each other this rich variety of personal experience.

The partiality of personal and homogeneous group experience may thus be completed in an open-hearted relationship enabling the people of a community to appropriate the best of each other's spiritual discoveries. To divide a community of a few hundred people into Baptist, Methodist, Presbyterian and Episcopal groups is to deny them, and prevent them from having, this richer spiritual experience.

Yet, special usages may have a unique function in the spiritual experience of some individuals. This leads to consideration of another principle of organization. Provision must be made for any minorities who strongly feel that certain distinctive rites or customs are needful embodiments of their faith and worship. Such minorities should be given opportunity to affiliate with the community church, and yet also to maintain their own forms of worship separately. This applies equally to Dunkards who desire to maintain their footwashing ritual and to Episcopalians who wish a high church service that can be held at special hours on certain Sundays by a rector from a neighboring city.

Another application of this principle may also be noted. In many village communities, groups otherwise cordial will be found who are not convinced that the community church is a real church. They wish to retain connections elsewhere, but will gladly become associate or affiliate members. It is a widely prevalent custom to maintain two or three kinds of membership to accommodate the desires of such groups. Some have said that this is superfluous in a really democratic church organization. Logically, it may be. Psychologically, it is not. These groups have as much right to their views in such matters as the majority has to its views. If accommodated, they can share the larger fellowship with a free spirit and can grow along with the majority to the mutual benefit of all. Living together, all such

groups will absorb the best from the majority group, and the majority will also be enriched.

To put it all briefly: It is a great mistake to ignore differences in organizing a community church. It is a great virtue to discover and welcome and allow for them fully and democratically. Homogeneity, in so far as it may come at all, will come from living together first, not from agreeing together first.

Another conviction which is a vital principle in our movement is that the purpose in establishing a church is not to extend an institution of a particular type, not even to extend the influence of the church as such. But the purpose is to serve the community. Here one's phraseology is likely to get one into trouble. I do not mean, to serve the community in the sense of being a benevolent institution, an uplift organization, but in the sense of being of the largest possible spiritual use to the people of the community. It follows that the method of the organizer must not be that of a leader (driver) who imposes his ideas upon the community. Rather, the community church organizer will be a discoverer. He will discover the cooperative spirit of the people—discover it to the people themselves. He will awaken it and set it to work.

Much of this is being done nowadays in the smaller towns. Business cooperation, civic improvement cooperation, social service cooperation, parent-teacher cooperation, recreational cooperation, all have prepared the way for religious cooperation. The com-

munity church organizer finds many barriers of twenty years ago destroyed, and wide gaps through social fences which even ten years ago were kept strictly in good repair. His tactics must utilize the cooperative spirit, working in and through it. Good organization consists largely in getting the people to work out their own salvation in an intelligent manner.

A third principle of the community church movement is that its purpose is not to propagate a system of theology, but to promote a way of life. Religion is a way of life, and theology is a halting attempt to philosophize and theorize correctly about God, man, and the universe. Theology, if it were as scientific, would bear the same relation to spiritual life that biology bears to physical life, attempting to explain it. We can breathe and be healthy and vigorous, yet ignorant of biology as a science. We can live a wholesome life spiritually without knowing anything about theology as such.

Historically or chronologically speaking, physical life comes first, biology afterward; spiritual life similarly is prior in time and takes precedence in importance to theology. To organize a community's religious life on the basis of a particular theological formula is no more reasonable than to admit to membership in its playgrounds and gymnasiums only those who subscribe to certain recreational theories.

The basis of union in a community church should be a common purpose to seek, live, and promote in the community and throughout the world that

quality of life which is, in its very God-given nature, eternal. No fair-minded person need misunderstand this. To make creedal statements, rather than life-purposes, a test and basis of fellowship is to insist upon identity of information and intellectual concepts, instead of upon unity of purpose and reality of spiritual experience. People who come together to worship in spirit and in truth, to seek and find the best and most that God wants them to find, to share their spiritual experiences, to engage together in trying to make the spiritual life operative throughout the social consciousness—such people not only meet the legitimate tests of church membership, but they approach their spiritual privileges with such open minds and hearts as to guarantee them a rich reward.

For these reasons, as well as for the added reason that it is subject to varying interpretations in the light of past controversies, theological nomenclature should be employed sparingly if at all in the forms and documents used in the organization and work of a community church. Now abideth faith (intellectual orthodoxy), hope (eschatological speculation), love; and the greatest of these is intellectual orthodoxy. So says the church which makes a creedal statement its test of fellowship. The greatest of these is *love*. So says Paul. Let us make love the center. Let common love to God and Christ, to the community and to humanity, draw people together in faith and hope. Let no one block the road to fellowship with a theological phrase; but open the way

with a loving, spiritual purpose. So says the community church.

PROCEDURE

While the principles underlying community organization of religion should be universally applicable, the procedure must necessarily vary. One must begin with the community where it is. What should hold in theory may not be possible all at once at the time of organization, but only after a successful experience of living and working together. Then, too, procedure will depend upon the existing status of organization. Where the community is unchurched the matter is different and often the procedure is simpler than where there is already a sectarian church in existence. Procedure is most complicated in an overchurched community.

In any case the first step is to develop the atmosphere of unity and the practice of togetherness. If this cannot be done at once in matters directly concerned with worship or religious education, it may be done in other ways. If the people are thrown together and community leaders work together in any community project, the spirit of unity thus developed may be turned into religious channels. Thus an open country community united to build a consolidated school. The folks then wondered—with the help of some thoughtful leaders—why their eight tiny Sunday-schools should not be brought together, and then why they should have eight irregularly held and

poorly attended church services. In this atmosphere of thought created by an experience of educational cooperation, one of the best rural community churches in America was developed.

A unified recreation program, a health campaign, a town-planning or suburb-planning project, may lead naturally to a consideration of the desirability of getting together to make religion at least as big as these lesser things in the community life. After people are all thinking, appropriate literature may be distributed, telling how it has been done, how it can be done, and what may be gained by a united program of religion. Care should be taken not to go about this in any propaganda fashion. Active persuasion should be taboo. The attitude of open-minded consideration and cordial respect for all differences of opinion should prevail. Nothing is gained by drive and hurry, and everything may be lost. You can not rush or argue a community into the atmosphere of unity.

A speaker or lecturer may be invited to address a community gathering sponsored by representative leaders of all the groups whom it is desired to unite and of unchurched groups as well. It is important that such a speaker should not be prejudiced in favor of any one type of organization, as against some other possible type which might be more acceptable to the people or more suited to the local situation. A forum discussion may well follow such a

lecture, and the speaker may be asked to answer many questions and thus clear up misconceptions.

When sentiment is educated and the atmosphere of unity prevails, the community is ready for action.

1. *If there is no church organization*, procedure is simple. Let a mass meeting of citizens decide, or appoint a committee to decide, which of the two available forms of community church is the better—a denominational church with a community or affiliate membership roll, or an undenominational community church. Unless a large minority of the people adhere to or prefer some one denomination, the undenominational form is likely to be chosen. If not, a vote of citizens should decide with what denomination their community should affiliate or align its organization. One of the more democratic communions should be chosen, since otherwise denominational officials may work against the community membership feature. In some instances good, growing, successful community churches have been disrupted by an official decision to abolish all but strictly denominational membership, after the church had entrusted itself to denominational care.

If a denomination is chosen, the question must be settled whether to enroll the church actively in a regular way, or to seek an affiliate relationship which will permit complete autonomy in all local matters but allow the congregation to seek pastoral supply or other special service from the denomination. If regular relationship is to be established, usually a

denominational official or committee will be asked to effect or complete the organization, but the affiliate or community membership roll—composed of those not willing to join as active members of the denomination chosen—must often be added by the local official board after organization.

If the undenominational form is chosen, a committee should be selected, to draw up constitution, by-laws, and covenant. These are adopted by majority vote in another mass meeting, with changes as may seem desirable. Charter membership signatures are then received, officers are elected in accordance with the constitutional provisions, and the official board proceeds to make plans for worship, religious education, and other community service.

2. *If there is a single denominational church* already in the community, the initiative will usually—though not invariably—be taken by those within its membership. One of two alternatives may be chosen. The congregation may vote to add a community membership feature, granting full local membership privileges without requiring change of private belief or denominational affiliation; or, the members of the congregation may join with other citizens to form an undenominational church. If the church already holds in its active fellowship a large section of the community and its influence is strongly felt, the former may be the better procedure. If its membership comprises only a minority of those who would join the community organization, the unde-

nominal plan should be adopted. Procedure is then the same as when there is no church in the community. The denominational group may dissolve, or may continue to exist as a "contingent" within the community church, paying membership dues, etc., and otherwise maintaining denominational standing, if desired. This arrangement sometimes simplifies property questions. It enables the group to hold annual congregational meetings, elect trustees and other officers, and so maintain a corporate existence for business purposes. Occasionally, too, it satisfies some of the more conservative who would otherwise be unwilling to enter the community organization.

3. *If a community already has two or more churches*, they may choose (a) to federate, adding a community membership roll; (b) to unite under the auspices of a single denomination, with an affiliate membership roll; (c) to dissolve and form an undenominational community church.

(a) If the decision is to federate, the membership rolls will be kept separate, the Sunday-schools and most other auxiliary organizations will be merged, worship will be united under a single pastor or associate pastors. Articles of federation will need to be drawn up, providing for a combined board of control and other necessary features.

If the district officials of the respective denominations of the federating units are known to be favorable to federation, and also to be compatible with one

another, they may be asked to visit the field and assist in or supervise the arrangements. But if there is any grave doubt on these points and the community knows what it wants, it will be better to go ahead and complete the organization. The experience of many communities shows that if an official will not favor he will fight, and the result may be ill-feeling and bitterness where all might have been harmony and peace.

Meetings of the congregations should be called separately to consider proposals to federate, after leaders in informal conferences have first thoroughly considered the matter. If the congregations are ready to consider such a plan, a joint committee may be appointed, consisting of an equal number from each church, with possibly one or more representatives of other interested organizations (such as Y. M. C. A., chamber of commerce, etc.) invited to sit in an advisory capacity. This joint committee should prepare articles of agreement or a constitution. Report may be made to a combined congregational meeting or to the congregations meeting separately. The plan should be thoroughly understood and patiently considered. Suggestions or objections should be given careful attention. The note of conciliation should prevail. Only after a considerable majority of each unit has heartily approved should the plan take effect. Usually the joint committee should be entrusted with setting up the new federation.

(b) Should it seem best for the competing congregations to unite under auspices of some one denomination, a choice of denomination should be agreed upon, and an official of that denomination asked to effect organization. The members of the competing churches become individually charter members of the new church. Trusteeships should be continued as may be necessary to hold or dispose of property interests. An affiliate membership should be added to the regular denominational membership feature, and should be available to local residents generally, including any individuals of the two uniting groups who may wish to work with the combined churches but may be unwilling to join the denomination chosen. This will enable them to retain their connection by putting their letters in some nearby church of their own faith.

(c) If the undenominational plan is chosen the members of the several units may proceed as in the case of a community having but one church.

No matter what form of organization is used, the over-churched community presents practical problems not encountered in an unchurched or one-church community, and it is often desirable if possible to obtain the services of an experienced organizer. Dr. John A. McGaughey, one of the most experienced community organizers, thus outlines the steps he usually follows in an overchurched village:

First, Conference. One or more public meetings are held, in which the community church is explained

by the organizer, questions are raised, problems brought to light, misconceptions cleared up. These meetings may last every night for a week; at any rate they continue until fully eighty percent of the people are favorable and all misconceptions are banished. Even a small group with the idea that the community church is a new sect, or involves a strange doctrine, may create difficulties for the others. Hence Mr. McGaughey thinks all such ideas should be dealt with before rather than after organization. During the day private and group conferences are held, and the organizer studies the field with reference to possible type of organization most feasible in view of available facilities, leadership, etc.

Second, Organization. At one of the conference meetings a committee is chosen to prepare a form of organization, including constitution, by-laws, and covenant. This is voted upon in a Sunday mass meeting, adopted with or without changes, and a charter membership roll immediately started.

Third, Membership Campaign and Financial Canvass. Teams are appointed to continue the campaign for charter members, and a financial campaign is opened, with personal team-solicitation to raise the first year's budget. The two are worked simultaneously, and every family in the community, without exception, is visited.

Fourth, Securing a Pastor. The organizer plans if possible not to leave the field until a pastor has been secured. As soon as probable support is determined,

selection of candidates or prospective candidates is made from lists of community-minded ministers available to the organizer through the community church service bureau, or otherwise.

The success of the enterprise during its first year, or first two years, depends in marked degree upon the right leadership. This is a fact upon which all students of the community church agree. Denominational superintendents sometimes recommend splendidly equipped men to denominational or federated community churches; but if the church is undenominational, ministers recommended from this source are not so likely to be desirable. The best men available are kept for the building up of denominational churches. Even the best ministers available in a district superintendent's territory may lack the community vision and have had no training or experience for a community-wide ministry. If the traditional service is to be rendered in the traditional way without expansion of program, why have a community church? More and more the value of the service rendered by special agencies for finding and listing ministers of community leadership attainments is being realized and appreciated. No community church organization has been completed until the right type of man has been found and called to the field.

While the above outline of Dr. J. A. McGaughey's steps in effecting an organization is not given as the only possible one, the author, after a wide study of

methods, believes that it represents the most practical procedure as yet developed for an overchurched field, where a one-hundred percent union of forces is desired. The principle that approximately eighty percent of the actively religious people of the community should favor the community church before organization is effected is sound in view of the fact that even a small faction in any existing church may decide to carry on separately if their objections and misconceptions are not met. While this might not be serious measured as opposition, it breaks unity, sets up the conditions of discord, and gives a leverage for property difficulties and official interference which may occasion much embarrassment. Thoroughness is especially essential, therefore, in organizing a community church in an overchurched field.

NOTE: See Appendix 1 for examples of constitutions, covenants, and other forms; and for a discussion of names, incorporation, and similar matters.

V

BUILDING THE BELOVED COMMUNITY

It has often been said that every church which exists to serve its community is a community church. But the community church does not exist to serve its community; it exists to express the community life; to give the community the means of serving itself. This is a clear distinction between the ordinary institutional church with a program handed down, or put over as a charitable project, and a church with a program built out of the conscious needs and desires of the community, by means of which the community gives expression to its best self and in which community self-determination is the controlling factor.

This difference in point of view and attitude is vital and involves a difference in approach and method. For example, at Winnetka, Illinois, where Dr. J. W. F. Davies is director of the community house, the house program is in charge of a board representing all the chief agencies of community life, of which the church is one. The various groups using the house are as far as possible self-governing, and work out their own group programs with the counsel of a leader. A schedule committee must regulate and coordinate the various features to prevent conflict and see that each group enjoys equitable privileges with every other group.

To those accustomed to the uplift and hand-down view of community service this doctrine may seem dangerous. It may seem to give too much responsibility to persons outside of the church. Such persons, however, are not considered outside of the church; as a part of the community they are potentially a part of the church and belong to its constituency. They act as the representatives of various groups or special community interests, such as the public school, the women's guild, the Boy Scout organization. The answer, therefore, is that the church itself is a community interest; church and community interests are not to be contrasted but identified. The community house belongs to the community, otherwise it is only a parish house. All groups in the community must be encouraged to become conscious of their joint ownership in the recreation program and facilities, and they will rise to their responsibilities.

The pastor of a Wisconsin village describes in a letter how this works: "The attitude of the community is: This is our place. We built it ourselves. It is for everybody to use, and, of course, nobody in Honey Creek would think of misusing his own property. It is very simple and it ought not to work, but it does work perfectly and everybody is happy in the freedom and matter-of-factness about it! There isn't any feverish idea of doing something unique, of packing formal programs with reports and charts and tables—nothing of that sort at all. We have no board of control. We don't even keep a record of the

time when the hall is used, by whom, or for what purposes. I suppose that if it should be forced to a show-down authority would be discovered somewhere which could assert itself, but it has not been necessary thus far, and something fine and wholesome would pass out of the enterprise if it should ever become necessary. It takes living together in a wholesome, kindly, unfevered way with everybody helping and no star performers with visions and such like to get the atmosphere in which this sort of a thing can live."

This does not mean that there is no leadership, but the leaders are not star performers; they are not superior uplifters; they are not dignified controllers and layers down of law. The leaders are the inspirers and discoverers of the community's best self, who help to bring that best self to effective expression. This is a new kind of leadership; a kind which must prevail not only in local communities where the movement is inaugurated, but throughout the community church movement at large, or it will become no different from hundreds of other movements which have followed the old traditional lines of superimposing something upon somebody.

A similar attitude and consciousness of identity prevails, or should prevail, in all the local relationships of the community church. If once the church and its leadership thoroughly identify themselves with the community so that this becomes a major presupposition of all thinking and planning, the

specific problems concerning community relationships will largely solve themselves.

In most towns and large villages a multitude of organizations exist working at cross purposes, developing a competitive spirit, and to some extent duplicating effort. Although originally organized to render service, in this atmosphere of struggle they gradually develop a self-protective program. They come to look upon their own continued existence and prosperity as more vital than the larger welfare of the community for which presumably they exist. Under these conditions actual service is often at a minimum. The whole uncoordinated melee of organization becomes more or less self-defeating with relation to community welfare. In many cities the community chest has arisen to counteract a similar situation in so far as money-raising activities are concerned, although it rarely deals adequately with any other phases of the conflict.

By the right approach the community church may lead all such interests to see their essential oneness as agencies for the protection, expression and development of community life. A community council may be formed, in which the church is represented along with other agencies. Together these agencies study, not their private internal problems, but the needs and desires of the community. They may then coordinate their programs, eliminate overlapping by combining similar activities under one agency, and plan for the future as a unified body of citizens seek-

ing to build the beloved community. This is a transformation. It replaces the self-centered with the community-centered vision. It creates a consciousness of the wholeness of the problem, which may be as wholesome for the church as for any other agency. If the church representatives see clearly and are community-minded instead of ecclesiastical-minded, they may become the leaders and prophets to give spiritual meaning and moral purpose to many activities which before were only slightly tinged with a weak brand of altruism.

In the smaller village or hamlet community fewer organizations may compete, if we omit the lodges; but cordial cooperation is just as essential and often just as lacking as in the larger centers. There will usually be a farmers' organization (Grange, Club, Farm Bureau) and possibly a merchants' association. These two may often be wholly out of sympathy with each other, especially if the farmers have a cooperative buying or selling association, and if some of the merchants have been suspected of gouging their rural customers. It is not the function of the church to cover up any meannesses; but on the positive side as the organization charged with discovering and bringing to expression the best aspirations of community life, the church must seek to create mutual understanding, cordial cooperation and fair dealing. Some churches sponsor community institutes—which is a better name than farmers' institutes, since it includes more. The problems of

the farmer, the merchant, the school, the church, and the community at large may be freely and open-mindedly considered. The spirit of "come let us get together for we live together" may be further fostered by forums featuring outside speakers, who come prepared to answer questions and direct a discussion of practical interest and benefit to a large proportion of the citizens of the community.

Community days—in particular, celebrations featuring pageants of community history or of stirring local events of the past—often assist greatly.

The organization of men's and women's groups in such a manner as to cut across the old cleavages of prejudice is another piece of wise strategy when it can be compassed.

The great role of the church in the small and socially divided community is to foster fellowship and develop community consciousness—the consciousness of oneness. Unless community life is spiritually interpreted this can never be done. Therefore the worship programs of the church are equally important with all its other programs; in fact, may be of the greatest importance. People who work and worship together will grow together and become one—a community. Understanding and sympathy will then replace misunderstanding and suspicion. But this is not an achievement to be wrought once; it is a continuous achievement to be continually wrought in community life.

In the country neighborhood, as well as in the hamlet and small village, the church must identify itself with the farmers' interests. This is still a too rare phenomenon. Gilbert E. Counts tells the story of a minister who sought out a professor at the state agricultural college to secure information relative to killing chinch bugs, which were working on the young corn. When asked who was applying for the information, he replied, "I am the country pastor." The dumbfounded official gasped for breath, then asked when the church had become interested in the farming problem. "I am interested in all farm problems down our way," returned the minister.

Mr. Counts comments on this incident: "If the pastor is a rural minded man, he will use sermon subjects and illustrations that are taken from the common surroundings. The Master with the country people talked of the sower, the seed, the grass, the lily of the valley, and the fruit-bearing trees. The community pastor can be of use to his community by taking the lead in raising vegetables, poultry or live stock. If there is a road to be built, he can preach about it on Sunday and then be present Monday morning to lend a willing hand. When the church is interested in the spiritual welfare of its people enough to unite all of its forces, it can carry over this message in the idea of other cooperative agencies. The community cinema can be owned and controlled by a group of citizens, who will see that the best of pictures are secured and will be able to

pay expenses at a very small charge. There is the development of community fair days, with their round of exhibits and athletic events."

Some will immediately take the attitude that for the minister to do such things as are mentioned here is to put himself in the light of an agricultural up-lifter in his relation to farmers, who may know more about their own jobs than he does. To be sure, the minister may assume such an attitude. If he does he will fail. But this is very different from having a rural mind and letting that rural mind identify itself with the community so far as to make farm and garden experiments a hobby, rather than golf or theories concerning the premillennial dawn. To hold membership in the Grange or Farm Bureau is vastly more important than to be a lodge member if one leads a rural community, because the former are closer to community life. Only the preacher so identifying himself with community life and so rural minded can be a community leader; otherwise he is an exotic "plant," not indigenous.

Someone will say that for the church to mingle with all the agencies of community life in town, village or city, is to dissipate its leadership and energy in chasing after secular things. But in the community view of religion there are no secular things, all things are sacred. There is only the use and abuse of life and its opportunities. There is only the spiritual and moral, or unspiritual, non-moral and immoral approach to life in its varied interests.

That what takes place in the church is sacred, and what takes place in the store, or the Grange, or the Kíwanis Club, is secular is a strange doctrine but one which nevertheless has governed the popular conception of the great cleavages of life. The community church treats religion not as a separate business set apart from life, but as a divine spirit pervading every activity of life.

In the light of community relationships the idea of the church as primarily an institution devoted to evangelism and religious education does not fade out. It is intensified but it needs reinterpretation. As will be seen in the chapter on that theme, religious education goes forward every waking hour of an individual's life. Therefore, by being a leader, inspirer and leavener in its community relationships, the church affects for good all the environmental factors in religious education. In fact, its community relationships are in a broad sense a part of its program of adult re-education in the moral and religious implications of living together.

Every relationship developed, interpreted and inspired by the community church levels the highways and broadens the areas of its evangelistic influence. This should be a perennial and continuous experience instead of spasmodic and occasional. At times when the program of community life makes them most opportune, campaigns of community-wide evangelism may be conducted. The more of a citizens' and laymen's enterprise such campaigns

can be made, the better. The more representative of all community groups the active workers are, the better. The team method of personal visitation may be used. Well-mated teams of two people each should be selected, to whom carefully chosen lists of prospective church members will be given. In making up such lists the membership of all related community agencies may be canvassed. Before visitation begins, a community service of consecration of the workers may be held. Cards containing printed copies of the covenant of the church, its ideals and purposes, should be supplied to each team in sufficient quantities. Persons who upon interview are ready to covenant according to the usage for reception of members, and to declare their purposes in harmony with the purposes and ideals of the community church, may wish to sign the cards upon being interviewed. Cards may be left with those not ready to sign. The use of printed covenants definitizes the work, leads naturally to conversation, and clears up misconceptions. Acceptance insures intelligent understanding of what it means to take the step of public covenanting or confession, and active membership. During the campaign, evenings may be devoted to meetings for prayer and fellowship. Team workers may meet together at the close of the fellowship service to talk over problems and exchange experiences. The campaign may close with a public recognition service, at which new members are welcomed.

Such a campaign may be regarded as the culminating point of the church's community relationships. But all other relationships are essentially evangelistic in the broad sense, since they inspire brotherhood, cooperation, mutual sympathy and understanding, and educate in the practice of Christian social living.

VI

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

The future of religious education in the small communities of America is closely bound up with the community church movement.

That the church has largely failed in the task of training the young needs no proof. Revelations, such as have been made by Dean Walter S. Athearn in his brochure, "Crime Prevention," will convince any who have doubts upon this point. As a result of country-wide surveys Dr. Athearn states that 66.5 percent of the Protestant and nominally Protestant children and youth under twenty-five years of age in the United States are not enrolled in any Sunday-school, week-day school, or other religious school under Protestant auspices. In addition 95.2 percent of the Jewish children of the United States are not enrolled in any synagogue school or other religious agency under the auspices of the Jewish church. More than three-fourths (78.4 percent) of the children of Catholic families in the United States are not being reached by the educational program of any Catholic church. Thus, counting Catholics, Protestants, and Jews, Dr. Athearn estimates that almost thirty-seven million boys and girls in the United States receive no religious instruction from any agency.

The result is low ethical ideals, a high percentage of potential criminals, and a citizenry growing up without chart or compass in a world whose ethical and social complications increase daily.

Why have the churches failed? It would take a long time and a great deal of white space to prove the contention that they have failed largely because they are divided, but all of the facts point toward this conclusion. It is, in fact, a conclusion admitted by many thinking leaders in the denominational order. "Denominational or sectarian religious education," says Norman L. Horn, writing in the *Reformed Church Messenger* (February 11, 1926, page 2), "will always fail as a program of education for the community. On this basis the problem will never reach a solution."

The Sunday-school movement in its beginnings was undenominational. When its potentialities were seen and the denominations began to adopt it as a method of religious training, they began at the same time to oppose and supersede undenominational organizations. The ostensible purpose was to guarantee that the children taught in the Sunday-school should obtain the true interpretation of Scripture, which in each case was the interpretation of the particular denomination to which the school was attached. It is customary to regard these old days of sectarianism as past, but this is a mistake. Sectarianism no longer puts the emphasis upon creeds to the extent it did in the days of our fathers. It is

not ended, however. It has simply shifted its emphasis. Not creeds but denominational loyalty is chiefly the matter of emphasis today. Loyalty to the organization, loyalty to its particular standards of religious training, to its traditions of religious life, and above all to its publishing house.

It ought to require no argument to prove that it is the duty of American citizens in every community to select the very best materials for religious education which are available, with due regard to local conditions and leadership, and regardless of denominational or interdenominational imprint. But the commercialization of religious education through the control of publishing houses has proceeded apace, until it is now one of the chief factors affecting the situation. Some denominational officials have gone so far as to make public (blacklist) the names of churches and Sunday-schools using Sunday-school material other than that published by the press of the denomination. It is a well-known fact that in one of the largest of the northern denominations, pastors need not expect promotion if their Sunday-schools are permitted to use any appreciable quantity of material purchased elsewhere than from the concern controlled by their denomination. This entrenchment of publishing interests is as strong a sectarian influence to prevent the advance of religious education as the old doctrinal spirit, which marked the sectarianism of our fathers.

Doubtless it is largely because of the denominational emphasis that so little headway has been made in the progress of religious education as handed down to the local community from above. Dr. Walter S. Athearn, in his "Indiana Survey of Religious Education," makes the following significant statement: "This survey shows conclusively that the denominations that have maintained expensive denominational state organizations for many years in Indiana do not have any better Sunday-schools in their churches in Indiana than do the denominations which have had no denominational leadership in the state."

The effect of this emphasis upon denominational loyalty is to weaken or destroy the fundamental loyalty to the needs of the people who live in the local community. The present system results in local division instead of local unity. Multiple and duplicating organizations, unable to make a community appeal, gather to themselves only small segments of the community and leave the marginal child largely uncared for. The boys and girls whose parents are not Methodists, or Presbyterians, or Baptists, who care little about the church, are the ones that most need religious education. They receive none of it at home, but they are the ones who are not being reached, except in inconsequent numbers. Statistics made public by juvenile court judges have repeatedly shown that practically no boys and girls have come before them who were members of any Sunday-school. It is the children of the un-

churched homes who must be reached by the program of religious education if the future of America is not to be jeopardized. Competing Sunday-schools and competing programs of religious education can never hope to reach these boys and girls, either in the small towns of America or in large cities.

Without community organization the failure of religious education in the future will be even greater than it has been in the past. The expanding program of religious education is not feasible in a small community with competing organizations. It is impossible to provide the facilities for the modern program. This program requires separate departmental activities and therefore a religious education plant with the proper housing facilities and equipment. The age groups in the small competing churches are too few in numbers to justify or make possible such a program. The available funds are too small, as a rule, to enable the weak, competitive congregation to erect a suitable plant.

But even if the competing churches each erected a suitable plant it would be an unwarranted waste of funds. The present system, even with the best physical equipment, divides the available leadership into three or four competing groups, whereas a community church makes the best leadership available for the united program, stops duplication of effort, and results in the pooling of experience and ability as well as funds.

Religion is not lived in a church but in a life. The religious education of every person in the community is going forward every day. His life is being affected spiritually and morally by all the agencies of the community—the school, the incidents of the street, the market place, the playground, the social gathering. Competing churches have never been able to exert an appreciable influence for Christianizing the other agencies of community life; nor have they been able to offer or secure cooperation in a well correlated plan for casting about the boys and girls of the community proper ethical influences by giving them adequate social and recreational opportunities. This impossibility of applying religious teaching to the common life confronts us today as one of the greatest tragedies of the denominational system.

When we look beyond the Sunday program to the developing week-day and vacation schools, this tragedy becomes the more poignant. The future of week-day religious education seems to be as yet in the balance. The principal legal obstacles placed in its path have been due to the fear that particular ideas and doctrines would be taught in violation of the constitutional provisions of state or nation. That this fear rests back upon the divided state of Christendom is evident. Except possibly in a few states there could be no legal grounds for opposition to week-day religious education if conducted on a community scale, under a community board, and for the teach-

ing of the ethical implications of religion rather than doctrinal tenets.

Quite aside from this, however, and even granted that all legal obstacles were everywhere removed, an adequate program of religious education, such as would justify the use of public school time, is impossible in most small communities except where there is a community church. The only alternative to a community church is complete cooperation between the churches. This is so fragile a thing that it has never been conducted successfully over any great period of time. It is a thing made up of compromises. It not only retains ecclesiastical control, but complicates that control by reason of the fact that each local ecclesiastical official is amenable to some higher ecclesiastical power residing outside the community. The community church, however, makes all control reside within the community. It heads up the religious education program not to a denominational standard or a compromise between denominational standards, but to the realized, recognized needs of the community. It makes possible the planning of a complete program with reference to the particular situation confronting any community.

Vacation schools of religion have a better chance than week-day religious education in the small community divided into sectarian groups; but usually one or more churches conduct the school, and here again we meet the handicap of not having the program on a community basis. That is to say, the

marginal people in the community, while they may be reached to a larger extent by the vacation school than by the Sunday-school, are not reached to the extent that would be possible if the entire program of religious education were on a non-sectarian community basis.

It is worth while here to quote again from Dean Walter S. Athearn's admirable brochure on "Crime Prevention" (page 22, 23): "Community work in the field of religious education cannot be done with denominational machinery. Community programs must grow out of a community's needs. The presence of a denominational consciousness will always dispel a community consciousness, and without a community consciousness no community problem can be solved. Experience has made it clear that community cooperation is not possible unless each member of the organization represents the whole community. Representation by churches, denominations, societies, departments, or districts is certain to result in special pleaders for vested interests. Continued harmony is not possible when members of an organization feel that they are representatives of factions or special constituencies. Each member should feel that he represents the welfare of all the children of all the people, and he should have no other constituency."

The only solution of this for the small community is the community church, projecting a program of religious education on a community basis in coopera-

tion with other community agencies. Where this is done the widest possible appeal can be made. The obstacles of divided control and outside interference, neglect of local community needs in order to follow the requirements of a standardized program, and legal obstacles, are all swept away. The way is clear for progress.

It would be too much to say that all community churches are living up to their opportunities in this respect. Where they have not done so it is usually due to the fact that the local religious leadership, or other local leadership, is not awake fully to the opportunity. It usually takes some time, after effecting community organization, for the full possibilities to dawn upon people. The ideals, aims, and tools of modern religious education are just as accessible, however, to a community organization as to a sectarian organization. They are available through the International Council of Religious Education, the Religious Education Association, and the publications of many interdenominational and undenominational publishers. The best pioneering that has been done in any phase of religious education has been initiated almost invariably by undenominational or interdenominational agencies.

That community churches have greater efficiency in religious education there seems to be little doubt. In February, 1927, the vacation school section of the annual executive committee meeting of the International Council of Religious Education announced

that eight percent of the Protestant churches of America now have vacation schools. In March, 1926, questionnaires were received by the writer from 137 community churches, revealing the fact that twenty-eight percent of these churches had conducted vacation schools in 1925. These 137 churches may have been above the average, but even if we allow a liberal margin, the statistics show that the community churches average three times as well as the other churches of Protestantism in the number of vacation schools conducted.

No survey is available concerning the number of community churches which are cooperating in week-day schools of religion. There are separate reports from a considerable number of such instances, but not enough upon which to base any generalization.

Investigators have repeatedly noted that the Sunday-schools of community churches tend to make a far wider appeal than those connected with regular denominational churches. About one-third of the churches reporting on the questionnaire, above mentioned, had a Sunday-school enrollment in excess of church membership. In some instances the former is more than double the latter. Miss Elizabeth R. Hooker, in her book on "United Churches," says (page 208):

"The close relationship between the united church and the whole community made it unusually easy to draw into the Sunday-school the children of the unchurched and the children of families preferring

denominations not locally represented. Therefore a considerable number of united churches had uncommonly large Sunday-schools. Whereas church leaders in general aim at a Sunday-school enrollment equal to resident church-membership—a standard which few churches attain—the number registered in the Sunday-schools of forty united churches surveyed in the field was, in twenty-seven cases, greater than the resident church-membership; and the average Sunday-school enrollment of the forty churches was 121.9 percent of the total church-membership. This fact is the more significant since for thirty churches surveyed by the Institute of Social and Religious Research in a study of the most successful churches discoverable, the average Sunday-school enrollment was only 93.8 percent of the average resident church-membership.”

Miss Hooker found that “the unusual number from each age-group enlisted in classes, by making the companionship and the proceedings more interesting, tended not only still further to swell the enrollment but also to keep adolescents in Sunday-school at the age when so frequently they slip away from religious influences.” She found that “attendance at the Sunday-schools of many united churches was also popular among the adults.” The statements made earlier in this chapter concerning the advantages of community organization in securing and maintaining a week-day program of religious education are also borne out by Miss Hooker’s survey. On this point

she says (page 215): "In their use of week-day religious education and the daily vacation Bible school, united churches . . . found an easier approach to a broader public. The ministers of such churches had uncommonly little difficulty in obtaining opportunities to teach religion in the public schools."

Experiments are now being made by the International Council of Religious Education with a proposed new curriculum, thoroughly correlating the vacation, week-day, and Sunday activities. It will be some years before this is beyond the experimental stage. Concerning its merits little can be said at the present time, except that it represents the best opinion of some of the most advanced leaders as to what is needed for the future. Such a program will be absolutely impossible of fulfilment in a small community without the aid of a corporate unity which only the community church can provide.

The community church organizes religion on a community instead of a denominational basis. It places the responsibility for religious education directly upon the community, instead of upon some board or group located outside the community and expected to put over a program in it. It makes possible a unified approach to the public school and other organizations, and thus increases the chances of intelligent cooperation. It makes possible the selection of the best volunteer leadership from the entire community, regardless of creed, sect, or other

affiliation. It pools funds, enabling the community to employ the best leadership. It gives freedom for choice of the best textbooks and other materials, regardless of their source or imprint, making the local committees responsible for selection of materials suited to local needs. It makes possible the erection and maintenance of the best religious education plant which the combined funds of the entire community can buy. It lays the groundwork for future progress in the direction in which the religious educational leadership of today is now thinking. It teaches Christian unity by demonstrating it.

The future of religious education in rural America lies with the community organization of religion.

VII

PROGRAMS OF RECREATION

The aim of a community church is to give the community a consciousness of its vital needs, rather than to build up an institution as such. It will not, therefore, play a lone hand, when it is possible to work with other agencies or institutions. Rather, it will seek to cooperate with others and supplement them, thus adding to and strengthening the common program. Doubtless this has a special application to the matter of recreation.

In the all-round development of manhood and womanhood four institutions usually make important contributions: the home, the school, the church, and the playground. The church is not primarily a recreation center, in the accepted meaning of the term; but it has a recreational function in the higher meaning of the word, and its special business is to give a spiritual or ethical meaning to recreation.

No one institution of the four mentioned can give a child all he needs. Whenever a public school, or school-and-playground, is taking care of the whole number of children in the community, the church should devote its attention to other groups, and to cooperating with the school program. Before ever any word can be said concerning the recreational task of a community church one must survey the forces at work, and the unmet needs. Then one

must decide who or what agency can best meet the needs. In such a survey all interested agencies should join, through selected representatives. It must be kept in mind that not all children, or older people, have the same interests. Minorities, as well as majorities must be included in plans and programs. The Scouts may suit the need of the majority of boys of Scout age; but the few who need and would enjoy a different type of program are entitled to have it.

Some churches will be in better shape physically to do a particular thing than some of the other institutions in the community, and they should have opportunity to do it; but whatever a church undertakes as its share toward the contribution of the whole life of the child, it should try to do that thing the best it can possibly be done.

Having discovered what needs to be done, the next thing of importance is to find the leadership. It is fundamentally necessary for a leader to have an outstanding personality that wins with the particular group, one who understands how the spirit of youth is awakened, and who sees the relationship of the particular thing being done by the group to the development of character. This man, or this woman, must be sought out. The leaders must have the time, the interest, the knowledge and the enthusiasm to be willing to give up other things for this particular work.

Every church must use volunteer leaders. It is important that the church search out its strongest

men and women whose personality wins youth. These people can be brought together and some of the fundamental principles of youth's development discussed. There are training camps and conferences with strong leadership courses. The church should select potential leaders and send them to such camp conferences. It should not depend upon leaders to volunteer, but should seek them out and develop them.

The leader must begin with a program which can be adapted to the group. This program must be definite enough to get hold of something. It must be constructive, so that it leads the group forward. It must be interesting to the group. This is the great value of the national programs which have been built up, like those of the Scouts and Camp Fire Girls; through years of experience these programs have been modified and improved to fit the needs of growing youth. But none of them will work of themselves. A real leader can take a group without much equipment and without very much of a program and by discovering the group's interests can himself become a power for good in their lives.

The clubs or groups formed should be able to finance themselves. The members can pay a small fee, so that when they need money, they have a fund ready. If the younger groups do not sell tickets for every enterprise that comes along, so that they become a nuisance to the public, it is possible for them to raise plenty of money to finance

their own work, such as paying for merit badges and pins and emblems and things that are needed for the equipment. But to do this right, and without overemphasis on the acquisitive part of the program, requires the right leaders. Viewed from any angle, the critical item in a volunteer recreation program is the right kind of leadership. The selection of such leadership in a church would fall on the committee who are responsible for this work.

There are groups that have leisure time on their hands. They need supervision and a program. This will be largely successful according to the personality of the leader if he has a conception of what boys and girls of various ages need. The age of nine to twelve offers a natural grouping for younger boys who are beginning to want a club. Many of them are still individuals but like to travel around with other boys. This age wants to be doing something. Activity is the key word. At Winnetka, Illinois, is a very successful club called the Pathfinders. They are trying to find out what the different business institutions in a community are and what they do. So a visit has been made to every shop and business concern in the community, and in each case the boys have met and talked with the proprietor or manager. Out-of-door activities greatly interest them, such as treasure hunts. But the object is to develop a thorough acquaintance with the life of the community and establish a basis for comradeship in the high-school

period. Groups of this type very often are available after school hours.

There are three reasons for having a church back of the recreation program for youngsters. First, because it is necessary to use the free time of youth in a constructive fashion. They enjoy recreation more than anything else, and it helps develop habits and attitudes of fair play and good sportsmanship which are needed all through life. Is not even family life largely a matter of the husband and wife being good sports and developing fair play with the children?

The second reason is the importance of developing in the minds of youth the fact that the church considers religion as belonging to all of life. The principles of religion are carried into sports and recreation. We need to emphasize very much here in America that one can carry his religious ideals into his recreational program, and that there should be a loyalty to the church which so helpfully provides opportunity for youth.

The third reason is that the church insures good moral leadership. Unless there is that, the great opportunity of the church is lost. The same ideals of honesty, fair play, clean language, generosity toward opponents, courtesy, carefulness of one's health, refusal to carry a grudge, good manners, reverence for personality, and reliance upon the Great Power outside ourselves, all need to be emphasized in the gymnasium and upon the playground, and at the same time can be a natural part in services of wor-

ship. Illustrations from the recreational life of youth are often very helpful in enlarging youth's interest in church worship. It is perfectly fair to emphasize to the boys and girls, too, that they ought to try to keep their games and public exhibitions so that they do not conflict with the community services of worship.

The best method of control and supervision of recreation is to have the major responsibilities for this upon the group itself. The sponsor or director can very easily have this matter discussed by the group, emphasizing the necessity of keeping the standards high and of taking no chances on having some disagreeable thing happen of which all would be ashamed.

School and church should get together and agree that parties shall not be held on a high-school night. The school should in turn try not to put its affairs on the evening that the church plans large recreational, social or religious functions. This can be done through conference, each exchanging dates with the other, or through a community council. There are schools that have shown the greatest desire to cooperate in so arranging their program. For instance, when the Camp Fire Girls have their meeting on one particular afternoon, the school program is lightened so as not to make them tired; and the recreational program for boys in the school is made much lighter on the afternoon of the day when the Scouts hold their meeting.

But recreation must go farther than dealing only with youth. The adult needs recreational opportunities if he would keep within him the glowing flame of youth. One of the most successful organizations is the drama club. Find first those who are gifted in this direction and are willing to do some studying, either by themselves or with an expert, until they become efficient enough to put on a play. It is advisable to keep this group limited so that each member will have some specific work in putting on a program each year. Then let there be a larger affiliated group known as "the players." This should include all those who like to take part in plays, assist in making scenery, do stage carpentry work, electrical work or advertising. This group may include all who have any interest whatever in the production, staging, and costuming of plays. They can build themselves up so as to become one of the institutions of the community. They will have programs of their own which they put on regularly once a month. They also are ready to help with special church functions, such as big anniversaries, and occasionally present some great religious character or ideal for the community. If only a nominal fee is charged, the whole community may have the privilege of attending these functions. At Christmas time they can make their gift to the community by producing some Christmas play such as Dickens' "Christmas Carol," or, "Why the Chimes Rang,"

making it an annual affair to which the children are invited at one time and the adults at another.

The church of today must have some facilities through which a recreational program can be worked out. In a smaller church it may be in just an extra room. Or it may be in the community house which it backs and turns over to the whole community. But the church should be careful not to call a parish house a community house unless it puts the control in a body of citizens who determine all matters of policy and run the house for the community.

In planning for a community house one should first make a study of other buildings that serve the community in order not unnecessarily to duplicate facilities afforded by others. Have a committee inspect community houses in other places of a type similar to the one contemplated, investigating building plans, cost of operation, use of various features, programs, and income necessary to operate. Do not pattern your building on any standard, but fit it to the needs of the community, adapting suggestions gleaned elsewhere. It is well to employ an architect who has had experience in community building. Architects without such experience are likely to lead the community astray unintentionally because of the confidence reposed in their authority. A good house architect may know little of requirements for community buildings.

It is important to plan the building so as to make supervision of activities possible with the least ex-

pense and smallest staff. This means that as far as possible rooms needing supervision should be so arranged as not to be cut off from the sight of each other or from easy access. Every room so cut off may need separate supervision. Plans for construction should also be such that the upkeep will be brought to the lowest possible cost.

Unless the building is to be very ample it is best not to dedicate any room exclusively to one particular activity. Plans in this respect should generally be elastic. Try to arrange rooms so that in passing from one activity to another it will not be necessary to disturb activities in other rooms. For example, it should not be necessary for people entering the game room to pass through the auditorium.

The way to get equipment is to develop needs for that equipment so that the community will see the demand and respond to it. There should be a committee to constantly study the local situation, watch the development of various groups, discover needs, and then create interest in providing the additional activities or equipment. The work of such a committee will also include a survey of all the programs available for various groups. There is much material available through The Playground and Recreation Association of America, the Boy Scout and Camp Fire Girl and Girl Scout headquarters, the Y. M. C. A. and Y. W. C. A., and similar organizations. Try out what plans or programs contribute that which is necessary or best for the community.

COMMUNITY HOUSE ACTIVITIES

The following illustrates the variety of uses to which a community house, backed by a community church, can be put:

Community Drama Club	Church School Teachers
Community Players	Post Office Employees
Public Speaking Class	Scout Exhibition
Art League	Classes in Applied Religion
Brush and Pencil Club	Boy Builders
Various Clubs, such as:	Gymnasium Classes for Various Groups
Triangle Club	Church Dinners
Orioles	Benefit Parties
Pathfinders	Receptions
Panther Club	Sunday Evening Club
Boy Scout Troops	School Faculty Meeting
Boy Scout Council	Orchestra
Camp Fire Girls	Music Guild
Camp Fire Girls Council	Horticultural Society
Blue Birds	Church Institute
Business Woman's Club	Village Caucus
Friendship Circle	Students' Conferences
Soccer Club	Lectures
Musical Kindergarten	Chamber of Commerce
Community House Sewing Class	Izaak Walton League
Motion Pictures	Rotary Club, Weekly Lunch
Classes in English	Men's Club
Folk Dancing	Village Improvement Association
Tennis	Town Meeting
Hallowe'en Party	Woman's Missionary Society
National Week of Song	Various "Circles"
Parliamentary Law Class	Political Meetings
American Legion	Relief and Aid Society
League of Women Voters	Chess Tournament
Elections—Polling Place	Committee Meetings
Sewing Guild	

Stitch-in-Time Club
Royal Neighbors
Base Ball Games

Indoor Picnics
Near-East Relief Sale
Reunion Dinners

Let it not be supposed, however, that a community house is necessary to a recreation program. In many small rural communities, it would be impossible to create interest or raise funds for a community house, at the outset; only as a program is begun and expands until the need is felt could sentiment be awakened for such an expenditure. And these are the very communities that need recreation under church leadership worst of all. Let it be said, therefore, that it is possible to develop a very complete community program, providing for every group, without special housing facilities. Leadership and good will expressed in organization are the real essentials. Any leader anywhere can start the needed program without spending one penny for apparatus or buildings.

First, call together the leaders of the community; such as, the superintendent of schools, officers of the grange or the business men's club, Parent-Teachers Association, and such others as may represent any organization interested in the youth of the community. Consider with them the facts of the local situation, such as the lack of well-ordered play life and consequent undesirable tendencies, and show how a good program would correct faults and result in a better-balanced development of character. Begin with the boys and girls. Plan to meet their

social interests every Friday and Saturday evening during the school year. Make the Sunday evening young people's meetings at the church a part of the whole program. Work into the program the public school socials, athletic events, and cultural activities. Beginning in this way, have a committee appointed to keep the program in balance, and to extend it as interest extends. Older groups may be developed as interest grows.

Through cooperation the different organizations in the community can supervise the play life of all the young people from the ages of 6 to 24 or older. Each season brings its type of games and parties that can be conducted as group play without letting the commercial spirit enter into the question. What the program does is to give order and balance, supervision and leadership, so that none is neglected and so that recreation will not become onesided, unprofitable, or unwholesome. It also gives other interests their place and keeps them from being crowded out.

VIII

THE LOCAL CHURCH AND THE WORLD COMMUNITY

It has been stated on every hand that the weakest point in the armor of the community church—and in particular, of the undenominational type—is missions and benevolences. This has been freely charged by uninformed critics, alleged by investigators, and admitted by some of the best friends of the community church—but for different reasons. The unintelligent critics have made the charge in the hope that it is true. Investigators have found it to be partly or largely true, as measured by conventional standards. The more advanced proponents of the community church have admitted the weakness of its world relationships, because they see that the community ideal should result in a new interpretation of these relationships. Most community churches and many leaders in the movement have apparently not grasped the “missionary” implications of community church ideals.

Let us deal first with the question, how effectively the various types of community churches are meeting the traditional tests of missionary obligation.

A questionnaire survey was conducted by the author in the winter of 1925-1926. The 111 churches from which answers were received report a total membership of 25,859, and total benevolences

amounting to \$81,226. This is an average of \$731.76 per church, and of \$3.14 per capita. The benevolence receipts of twenty-five leading denominations from all living sources in 1925 as compiled for the United Stewardship Council amounted to \$4.11 per capita. This included gifts from individual donors as well as those received through the regular church channels, and there is no information available to indicate how much this per capita amount would be reduced if the individual gifts had not been added into the total. Taking the per capita benevolences as reported, however, the figures for the 111 community churches rank better than those of the Southern Baptists, Christians, Friends, and Methodist Protestants, and are outranked by those of the remaining twenty-one denominations. Taken separately the undenominational churches ranked lowest in per capita gifts to benevolences, the denominational type churches ranked second, and the federated churches first. The best record of per capita giving for all these churches, however, belongs to an undenominational church, made up wholly of members in moderate circumstances—a church without wealth. The annual benevolences of this church amount to more than \$25 per member.

Some undenominational churches have a prejudice against “missions” on account of their knowledge of the misuse of home mission funds to divide communities, weaken Christian unity, and put the church of Christ to shame in hundreds of small

towns and villages. For example, a Colorado community church was formed from the union of three denominational elements, each of which had been supported for years in competition with the others by home mission funds aggregating in some years more than a thousand dollars. When these people walked out from under the protection and impoverishment thrust upon them and discovered the joys and efficiencies of working together, they decided that home mission boards were more of an enemy than a friend of the Kingdom of God. They were judging from experience, which is the principal criterion of judgment for us all. A process of education has resulted in awakening a discriminating judgment with regard to enterprises that seek to build Christian communities—rather than denominational groups—in America or elsewhere.

The wrong kind of pastoral leadership is responsible for the inhibited benevolence tendencies of a few undenominational churches. Such pastors used to be found in many denominational churches before the days of apportionments, assessments, and drives. The drives drove some of them out of their lethargy, and others out of the denominational machine with its too brazen insistence on how much and how many. Some of them have found berths in undenominational pulpits.

Another factor which must be taken into consideration is the comparatively high local expenses of many of the undenominational churches at the time

and for the period in which surveys have been made. Most of these churches are of recent origin. The erection of new buildings and remodeling or enlargement of old buildings to meet the needs of a community program have absorbed attention and required heavy expenditures. An undenominational church of less than 400 members gave \$1200 to missions, apparently a sum of only moderate dimensions; but raised that year \$90,000 in cash and pledges for an addition which was to serve both as a religious education building and a recreation center.

In many communities formerly subsidized heavily by one to three home mission boards, the community church has taken over sole responsibility for the pastor's salary and often pays a salary greater than was formerly paid for the part-time services of two or three preachers. An undenominational church which contributes \$200 to missions and wholly supports its own work is in reality giving just as much to benevolences as a denominational church of the same membership which pays \$400 into the benevolence treasuries and receives back \$200 home-mission subsidy.

A considerable proportion of undenominational churches have been formed by a merger of two or more weak denominational units, or by the conversion of a single weak denominational church with the addition of individuals of other denominations not organized in the community. Almost invariably these weak denominational units gave little or

nothing to benevolences; and often they were the marginal churches in out-of-the-way places which were supplied intermittently by "railroad" preachers who gave them no leadership; the missionary education program of the denomination never filtered down to them at all. Thus their members have no background for the quick development of a missionary program; such development must necessarily be slow. These undenominational churches whose lack of missionary background is chargeable to the denominational neglect of the fields in the years past are not fairly to be compared with denominational churches of long standing and long cultivation in missionary education.

Any just consideration of this question will be impossible until it is recognized that surveys cannot adequately measure all the factors involved, and that ordinary statistical comparisons are therefore not valid. The only way to judge these churches as a class is by measuring the degree of progress made from their former condition. Miss Elizabeth R. Hooker used such a measurement only for the federated type, and found that "the contributions of federated churches in 1923-24 were considerably higher than those of the churches combining to form them had been during the year before union. The annual gain in dollars to benevolent agencies through the formation of 167 federated churches for which comparative figures were collected was \$43,055." ("United Churches," page 273.)

In measuring the benevolence efficiency of undenominational churches one fact which stands out is that, while denominational officials appear to have been almost universally critical of the missionary giving of undenominational churches, they have done little to adjust the denominational or interdenominational agencies to the situation. Almost any agency, to be sure, will accept gifts from these churches, while at the same time its officials are solemnly averring that the undenominational church is a failure.

The Missionary Education Movement is interdenominational. It would appear to require a very small adjustment and a small expenditure for promotion, for this movement to make contact with the undenominational community churches. It could offer them the standard texts for study groups. It could set up regular missionary promotion and an interdenominational program of missionary education, making it adaptable to the undenominational church. If it wished to be perfectly unbiased, it could include in this program many undenominational agencies which are rendering service in otherwise neglected areas. Until such an adjustment is made, and until a distinction is drawn between competitive and non-competitive missionary enterprises, so that community churches may give in harmony with their convictions, the sincerity of denominational criticism of their real or supposed weakness in missionary giving will not be very convincing.

All this has been said on the assumption that the traditional view of missionary enterprise is the one which community churches should naively accept. It is said by way of evaluating the community church according to the criteria commonly used both by its enemies and by a large proportion of its friends. But in the writer's private opinion much of this is beside the mark, and it misses the most important consideration.

✓ The logical goal of the community church movement is to change the basis of organization from that of the denominational group and traditions to that of the community and its needs. This goal is as yet only imperfectly conceived by many community churches which have arisen chiefly to meet specific local conditions or as a matter of local expediency. It is imperfectly realized in the forms of organization of many of these churches. But it is there by implication in them all. Most leaders in these churches feel that the local church exists for the whole community rather than for any group in it; that it is of and by that community rather than of and by some external organization or order; and that its program looking beyond the local community should therefore be for other communities as such and for the world community, rather than for any sect or denomination. For a community church to make its outside contacts only through a denominational body is better than to have no outside contacts; but it is a contradiction of its own genius, and represents, if

continued, a thwarting of its own possibilities and a disregard of its responsibilities. /

The community church represents a new principle in religious organization, however imperfectly it may express itself in individual instances. Not new in the sense of unique, but new as contrasted with the prevailing principle. The prevailing principle is that of organizing groups upon a sectarian or denominational pattern. The new principle is that of organizing communities for the expression, cultivation, and propagation of religious ideals and the spiritual life. Ideally, and in some few places actually, every individual in the community is included, and community organization is thus realized. This inclusion is in circles whose circumferences vary in distance from, but revolve about, a common center. There is the inmost circle of active, regular, or communicant members; an outer circle between whose circumference and that of the inner circle are associate or affiliate members, and those who support and attend and who may be enrolled as sustaining members. Then there are still other circles of participation, including those who through various forms of social, cultural, religious-educational, or practical service are contributing a partial expression of their lives, gaining a partial spiritual culture, and so belong in a less vital way to the community church; while not enrolled on the church roster proper, they are enrolled on some auxiliary.

This conception of the church as the community organized or becoming organized into a spiritual entity can not but have its "missionary" implications, and its influence upon the "missionary" ideals of community churches. It is interesting to see how these ideals are beginning to manifest themselves.

^We have already noted that many undenominational community churches are suspicious of denominational home missions, because of their experience of the evils fostered by a home mission policy that seeks to protect denominational interests and perpetuate denominational groups, regardless of the needs of the community. This feeling has been largely justified by experience; but if it stops there, as sometimes happens, the result is the negation of further experience to which the community church is entitled. Some churches have gone on to the positive side of this. They have said: The community ideal of religious organization is itself one of the greatest needs of the world. It is fundamental to the future progress of religion in America. Therefore, when we put our utmost into the development of our local work, so that this new ideal may be concretely set forth to the world and its virtues seen by other communities, we are doing a piece of service which ranks with any so-called home mission project, and is superior to many such projects.

The justification of this point of view lies in the facts. The community ideal frees religion to do its work. Several community churches have already

exerted an influence region-wide, resulting in the spread of the ideal sometimes to localities hundreds and thousands of miles distant. This has eliminated the home mission problems of many communities. It has created a more virile spiritual life, and where new community churches have thus been brought into existence, many who before were beyond the influence of the church are among the most morally and spiritually potent individuals in the religious life of the community.

There is much to be said for the belief that the best single contribution to American social, moral, and religious life which any community church can make is to carry the community church ideal to such a high degree of practical expression as to assist materially in its propagation. It has been shown by surveys of impartial investigators, including the one of Miss Hooker, previously alluded to in this chapter, that the unchurched of a community are drawn to the community ideal of religious organization in larger numbers than to the denominational church, and that large numbers of them have become active in the spiritual life of the community as a result of this religious reorganization. As a means, therefore, to what is usually called evangelism, the community church is of the first importance, and evangelistic results will be greatly increased in proportion to the increase in the number of community churches organized.

Another manner in which the community church ideal is beginning to manifest itself is seen in the tendency of strong communities to assist weak community churches. In some agricultural areas, and in some mining sections, community life has been severely hurt by financial depressions. One Ohio church, in a town of several thousand, has sought out such a situation and brought to it financial aid from its benevolence budget. A Vermont church has adopted the policy of giving regularly a portion of what is usually known as the home mission fund to assist a weak community church in a tiny hamlet of New England. The sentiment that this is a proper expenditure of benevolence funds has found expression from the floor at community church conferences with increasing frequency.

The expressed desire of community church leaders, and the evident desire of most community churches, is to influence the reorganization, adjustment or adaptation of present agencies, rather than to set up new ones. That this is the better course there can be no doubt. That it is a feasible course in the case of home missions, seems not beyond belief. The Congregational Home Missionary Society has already granted aid to a few small community churches temporarily embarrassed by financial depressions, without making requirements which involve the surrender of any local prerogatives or pledging the community to any favors in return. When aid is habitually granted solely on the basis of need, the integrity

of the benevolence agency as a Christian institution may be said to be established. If the Congregational board, or any other board, were to announce a policy of setting aside designated funds of community churches for this purpose, and were to make separate reports on the use of such funds, there is no doubt that many community churches would be glad to designate their benevolences accordingly. This might be a solution of one part of the home mission problem quite in harmony with the community church ideal, which includes self-determination and protection to the integrity of community religious life.

As the number of community churches increases, and as they adopt in increasing numbers the policy of designating funds for special service to communities, as opposed to denominational groups, the influence of the community church ideal upon the reorganization of American religious life will grow.

On the question as to how the implications of the community church ideal are being developed in relation to what has been known as foreign missions, one can speak with far less assurance. It is hoped, rather than asserted, that an ever increasing number of community churches are viewing this branch of human endeavor in the light of the building of the world community, of good will and brotherly love on the basis of Christian teaching. It is also to be hoped that increasing numbers of community churches are interpreting foreign missions as a service

to assist in the spiritual development of people abroad, rather than merely "sending the Gospel to the heathen." The difference between these two conceptions involves the difference between a more or less conscious superiority in attitude and method, and a feeling of equality and brotherhood which finds itself expressed in attitude and method.

Granted that the attitude is in harmony with community church ideals, one of the implications of these ideals for foreign missions is that the growth of churches abroad must be as largely as possible self-determinative, and free from the denominational divisions and social cleavages which have characterized Christianity in America. In a real sense the religious life of every community must be indigenous. This does not mean, as some may think, that a non-moral or immoral Roman Catholicism must be approved and let alone on the theory of its being indigenous to the life of a backward people; nor does it mean that Buddhism, with its idolatrous interpretation among the more ignorant of its devotees, should be praised as equal to the ideals of Jesus or the teachings of the religion bearing his name. What it does mean is that the method of missions should be to grow out of and root itself in the community life. This is recognized by the best foreign mission statesmen today, and is not a peculiar ideal of the community church movement. It is, however, gaining headway all too slowly in practice. The time is coming, if it is not even now at hand, when enlight-

ened policy must consider getting the nationals out of the foreign mission enterprise as rapidly as possible, and allowing native leadership full control. Community church ideals could find no harmony with a policy which has imitated the pagan practices of business exploitation—that of parceling out areas to the various nations (or denominations) concerned and strong enough to demand their share.

Another implication of the indigenous church abroad is that the native peoples shall, as far as possible, support their own enterprise. That this can be done to a far larger extent on many fields than it has been done seems apparent.

If we have an indigenous Christianity abroad we may expect the enrichment of the Christian religion in many ways. Christian concepts will be interpreted in the light of the varied traditions and experiences of every nation on earth, and through the interrelationships of the world community these conceptions will intermingle so that the spiritual experience of all peoples will be enlarged.

That all this is implicit in the community church ideal would be freely granted by most of the leaders in the movement. Just what community churches are doing and can do to make these implications explicit in practice is another question. Tendencies, so far as they are observable, may be said to show three directions of effort, supplementary rather than conflicting. Probably the majority of community churches are content to await the time when the

spread of these ideals will have a vague effect upon the foreign mission enterprise. Beyond this, they may seek to designate a portion of their funds to such union enterprises and native church establishments as may come to their notice.

Another tendency is to give funds for the support of undenominational or interdenominational schools, because it is in these schools that the best native leadership is being trained to view the Christian enterprise as an undenominational, national and world-wide enterprise. It is these leaders, rather than those who are being trained in the strictly denominational schools (or so it is believed) who will best carry forward the church in their part of the world so as to make it an indigenous institution.

A third, and the writer believes a very significant tendency, has made its appearance in the last three or four years. There is a growing feeling that a demonstration of community church ideals in some specific enterprise abroad may do more to influence foreign mission procedure than any other one thing upon which community church people could concentrate. No better field could be selected for this purpose than the one which has been chosen; namely, Latin America. For here denominational tactics have failed more signally than anywhere else in the missionary world. Such a demonstration was begun in a small way in 1923, centering at Jucuapa, Salvador. The ideals of making it indigenous have been strictly observed, and the work has been carefully

developed in harmony therewith. In 1926 this enterprise had developed into a coeducational school, with ninety-three pupils, having a teaching force of seven instructors. The only North-Americans in the enterprise are Dr. and Mrs. Edgar L. Humphrey, and they are largely supporting themselves. This is in harmony with the ideal of becoming part-and-parcel of the life of the community.

The school has conformed to the highest requirements of the Salvador government, and has added courses from time to time in accordance with recognized needs. Religion is a vital part of the curriculum and the Bible is the textbook. The teaching is ethical and spiritual, not theological. The emphasis is constructive throughout. There is no direct combating of Catholic teaching as such. In other words doctrinal and historical issues are not a part of this program, but the constructive rooting of the life in a vital faith in Jesus and his way of living is the aim. One result, of course, is a complete break of the pupil with the past, including his Catholic training. But it comes constructively and of itself.

In addition to the school community there have developed three organized community churches in as many outlying villages. The people in these villages have not called for any financial assistance, but have built their own churches. A number of other villages are being developed, but have not yet (1927) reached the stage of formal organization.

It should be said, in explanation, that Dr. and Mrs. Humphrey are well known to the best authorities on Latin American life and work, and are personally endorsed by them. They have lived in Latin America more than twenty years. Dr. Humphrey is a graduate of some of the best educational institutions of the United States. Mrs. Humphrey is a trained nurse. There can be no doubt of the quality of the leadership of this work, nor of the phenomenal success it has thus far attained on principles in harmony with the community church ideal. Those who sponsor this demonstration are doing so with the belief that when its purposes and achievements are clearly understood, the methods which are implicit in the community church ideal for the foreign mission enterprise will be adopted in other parts of the world.

IX

COMMUNITY CHURCHES AND THE STATE FEDERATION¹

"The two faults of our American Protestantism are its overlapping and its overlooking." The truth of this utterance of Professor Commons is recognized increasingly.

Two groups especially have been forced to face the facts—those charged with the leadership of the denominations, and local Christians who have been compelled to feel the evil effects of duplication or the lack of religious privileges.

The movement to find a remedy started with the former group. The Maine Interdenominational Commission, pioneer of the whole federation movement, was suggested by a fraternal delegate from one denomination to another. The Federal Council was organized by the national denominational bodies. Leaders of the denominations have been charged with being narrow and sectarian; but, though they are loyal to their denominational interests, their very tasks should compel them to take wide views, study the cause for failure and success, and to see the need of adjustments not merely in behalf of their denominations. As a bishop of the Protestant Episcopal

¹Material for this chapter was furnished by Edward Tallmage Root, Executive Secretary of the Massachusetts Federation of Churches.

Church once said, "We have neither men nor money to multiply small parishes." Sometimes the denominational leaders are in advance of the people in local churches where an adjustment is obviously necessary.

In one typical case, the combination of two churches was suggested by the trustees of a neutral institution effected by the Protestant duplication. The denominational secretaries at once recognized that a merger was desirable. When the proposition was laid before the people, one of the pastors was hostile, and in the joint committee of five from each church appointed at the request of the denominational leaders, half were opposed. Yet the logic of the facts brought practically unanimous decision and a happy combination.

At the same time, however, there has been a spontaneous movement of the people themselves in many a community, impatient of division, less cautious because less familiar with the traditions and machinery of the denominations. After all, it is the people on the field who are most concerned when religious needs are overlooked or needless duplication defeats its own ends.

Now, obviously, success in "overcoming our overlapping and overlooking" depends upon harmonizing the efforts of these two groups. A State Federation of Churches, on the one hand officially representing the denominations, and, on the other, by its very existence standing for comity and cooperation, is in

a position to secure such mutual understanding. This can be illustrated by its methods of handling both types of local lay-movements.

1. *Overcoming Overlapping by Independent Churches*

Especially during the last twenty-five years, in many a new community, the people have said: "We ought to have a church. But see! we come from six or more different denominations. If we attempt to choose a denomination, we will simply divide the community. Let us become independent, in order to include all." The incipient congregation was, of course, approached by representatives of different denominations with fair offers. To retain independence the people had to say to all, "Hands off!" Naturally a critical attitude was left on both sides. Denominational officials have felt distrustful of union churches. To the latter, denominations have seemed selfish corporations.

Left to themselves the churches had to work out as best they could the problems of organization, pastoral leadership, buildings, and the disputes incident to human nature especially in a small and struggling parish. Absorbed in the struggle for existence, they did not always, or speedily, see the necessity of sharing in the world-wide work of Christianity. The wonder is not that so many union churches have succumbed in the struggle or sought refuge in denominational connections; but that so goodly a proportion have survived to grow strong and efficient. Their success is a proof of vitality and virility.

As they multiply and learn of one another's existence, instinctively they seek fellowship. But here they face another dilemma. If they create a new organization and justify it by condemnation of denominational policies, they themselves become a denomination. Is there any solution? One State Federation at least, that in Massachusetts, gives an affirmative answer. It has for sixteen years offered to the independent churches within the state fellowship, not merely with one another, but with all churches, by holding under its auspices an annual conference. Leading representatives of the denominations are given place upon the program. The pastors in their discussions proudly honor their denominational fellowships, while enthusiastically recognizing their privilege in serving union churches. After attending such a conference, Dr. Roy B. Guild, then with the Federal Council, wrote that it seemed to solve the problem of fellowship and afford a precedent for other states and the national organization.

The State Federation also assists new churches to organize, helps them find the right men for pastors, and suggests openings for missionary outlook and outlet. For seven years it has compiled a table of statistics, giving each church the stimulus of seeing its achievements in print and acquainting it with the progress of others. Recently a new precedent has been made, when a church that has outgrown the basement in which it is worshiping laid its need of adequate equipment before representatives of lead-

ing denominations. It said: "A union church is not undenominational, but interdenominational." While no definite promises were given, warm sympathy was expressed by all. The secretary of one conservative denomination observed: "This may afford a solution in many a suburb where no one denomination would be justified in occupying the field." In another case, where the problem is the retaining of an able minister by increasing his salary, the State Federation is testing the question whether interdenominational aid can be secured, at least from individuals.

2. *"Overcoming Overlapping" by Combining Churches.*

Recognition on the part of local people of the evils of existing duplication has been rarer; but such cases are now multiplying. The federation movement has gradually educated the public to see these evils. In a state which has no federation the people of the three churches in a village discussed getting together and sent for an outside federation secretary. Only one of the three denominational officials was sympathetic at first, but so strong was the popular feeling that all three churches voted to combine. In another large town, laymen in the strongest church at its annual meeting carried a motion to propose a combination of all the Protestant churches. It would have made a church of 1300 members. When told, "Why, gentlemen, with such a church you must have a corps of pastors!" they admitted the necessity, and planned big things. Naturally, the denominational

leaders and even the pastors discouraged the proposition. There are obvious dangers in popular enthusiasm. The impossible may be attempted. On the other hand, the zeal of born leaders, impatient of sectarianism, may be quenched.

But this instinctive effort to find a remedy may be easily guided into constructive channels. One denominational official may occasionally do this individually. But, even if he has breadth and interdenominational spirit, he will be suspected so long as he acts alone. Collective action will disarm suspicions and combined wisdom can solve the knottiest problems. Such cooperation of denominational heads is made possible by a federation representing them all. At Warren, Mass., for example, the Congregational Board of Pastoral Supply advised its people to ask the secretary of the State Federation to present the plan for a federated church. The church invited its two sister congregations. On the platform sat also the District Superintendent of the Methodist and the State Superintendent of the Universalist Church. They followed with hearty endorsement of the message, from their own experience. The three secretaries met with the committee of the churches and worked out Articles of Agreement which were unanimously adopted. In another case, the Congregational City Missionary Society telephoned: "Can you come and tell us how to persuade our church at ----- to unite with the

neighboring Methodist Church?" In this case a happy merger as a denominational church resulted.

In most cases, however, the "federated church," in which each unit retains denominational connection, is the only practicable solution. Its organization is complex; but it has one great advantage as long as denominations continue to exist. It trains groups still loyal to their own denominations to work heartily and intimately with those of other communions. In proportion as such mergers multiply, all our denominations will be leavened by an intelligent interdenominationalism. "Exchange of fields," on the other hand, forfeits this advantage. Part of the people have surrendered their own denominational preference. They will either forget or regret it. If the latter, they will always be conscious of a prejudice against the polity forced upon them; if the former, they are as much denominationalists as before.

The process of healing the rents in the seamless robe of Christ is not the work of man. One of the truest statements outside of Holy Writ is that in Tennyson's well known couplet:

God hath fulfilled himself in many ways,

Lest one good custom should corrupt the world.

Those who feel the need and seek the remedy, whether they are denominational or local leaders, must know of each other's efforts, have mutual confidence, and work together. A mighty movement is taking place which may be known in history as "The Protestant Readjustment."

X

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE COMMUNITY CHURCH MOVEMENT

In its protest against the denominational order, one finds the most obvious significance of this new movement. That this is also the most superficial aspect of its meaning will be evident to the careful student. Nevertheless, it is not to be denied that protest is almost invariably present as an actuating factor, wherever a community church is organized.

There are doubtless hundreds of villages and rural districts in which church life under denominational auspices is flowing along smoothly with little discord, and resulting in large service to community life. These communities, however, are not typical of small town denominationalism. In the vast majority of the smaller communities of America denominationalism has come to be identified with several or all of the following evils:

(a) Competition for members, money and prestige. Typified by a grand rush to win the newcomer if he appears to be somebody, and to be able to help the church; a grand overlooking of his advent otherwise.

(b) Demands upon the community for service to the church or denomination; no service rendered to the community except in such a way as to insure credit and prestige accruing to the denominational name.

(c) False lines drawn, in preaching and practice, between the secular and the sacred. For instance, a young people's social held under church auspices is in the category of the sacred, the activities of a public playground are secular; a gift to the denominational orphanage is benevolence of a higher spiritual order than it would be to donate the same amount to the Near East Relief or the orphanage work of a secret society.

(d) Interest developed in the Kingdom of God only as represented by the denomination, and comparative ignorance fostered or encouraged concerning the other aspects of it. As, when a village Methodist preacher who was approached with a proposal to consent to the union of three churches in a hamlet of 250 people for the sake of the Kingdom of God, retorted, "My denomination *is* the Kingdom of God in earnest." Thousands of denominational preachers (I will not say ministers) who would never openly acknowledge such a sentiment, live according to it; and many of them feel that their bread and butter depends upon doing so.

(e) Use of disingenuous methods, on occasion, to support denominational programs and profits. As, when a small percentage of the profits of the book and publishing business of the denomination are paid into the ministers' pension fund, and it is thus made a matter of self-interest for the minister not to investigate the comparative merits of other goods or publications, and a matter of "loyalty" for his church not to exercise judgment and discrimination in the selection of its purchases.

(f) Waves of lethargy, followed by waves of feverish wasteful effort. For months all the churches of a village do nothing much, except drift along with one to four preaching services a month. Then one church holds a revival, and forthwith all rush to do the same, each crowding the other so as to secure the earliest dates and have the most raw material left to "work on."

(g) The culture of clannishness. A public spirited deacon of the Presbyterian church gives \$5,000 to start a fund for a community social center, and leaves the details to his pastor or a committee of which he is chairman. It is decided the center needs supervision such as the Presbyterian church can best give. It becomes a parish house. Forthwith the Baptists bring pressure on the pride of their more well-to-do members, and presently up springs out of the ashes and dead bones a new parish house with an even better rug, or piano, or front door, or something, than the Presbyterians have. The Methodists counter by enlarging their basement, and doubling their budget for young people's work, lest some of the Wesleyan youth be drawn away by the allurements of the rival parish houses. And the pastor of the Christian Church, whose flock is unable to afford a parish house, inveighs against the worldliness of the other sects. And there you are, two parish houses, a renovated and enlarged basement, a jealous and embittered sister church, and no better planning, programming, leadership, or coordination. The unchurched as unserved as ever, after all the expense. The clans more clannish than before.

So this is denominationalism in the small town.
And the people are against it.
Who can blame them?

For a long time those who were against this sort of thing floundered around. They felt shame-faced when they met the taunts of outsiders about the inefficiency and small-mindedness of the churches, and their peanut-stand business. But as long as they bristled up and took the defensive attitude, in blind loyalty, the conditions continued to exist. By one means and another the first experiments in a better method were initiated; they gained publicity; a methodology of change from competition to co-operation appeared; and then began to move what we call the community church movement.

This movement is a protest. Yes, of course it is. A protest against all the sins I have mentioned. Even more, it is a protest against the anachronism of the denominational spirit in an age of growing unity and community solidarity in everything else but religion.

If that were all, if that were any more than the superficial aspect of the significance of this movement, it would end in iconoclasm. The community church movement is a constructive force. It is trying to make organized Christianity respectable. Years ago, when Elbert Hubbard, at the beginning of his career, tried to bring the fighting faithfuls of East Aurora together into a group who could sing, "All one body we," with as much veracity as vigor,

sectarianism may have been respectable. In those days mental horizons were bounded on the east by separative theologies, on the west by tribal eschatologies, on the north by exclusive sectarian patents on various rites and ordinances, and on the south by plans of church government handed down in detail and possessed by "our" denomination alone. But those horizons have been pushed back by long-distance travel, long-distance listening-in, long-distance commerce, and long-distance education. In the process, to mix a metaphor, the old categories have been churned up and there is nothing left of them but buttermilk.

God has grown. You can no more put him into a sectarian mold now than you can put Santa Claus into a sack-full of his own candy. Sectarianism is no longer respectable, because it has become illogical, absurd, contrary to acquired knowledge. Only inertia and the fear of change prop up its forms and shadows.

The community church movement would be equally illogical and absurd if it were a mere protest. Leaving the things that are behind, it strives to press on to the things that are before. It previsions the church of tomorrow, and tries to take the local steps toward what must come to pass on a nationwide, and perhaps a world-wide scale, in the logic of events.

Among many of its friends, the community church movement is regarded as the forerunner of

Christian union on a national scale. It has been called the local option phase of the Christian unity campaign. This much is true: that some degree of Christian unity is a prerequisite to the formation of a community church, and that a larger measure of local Christian unity is a predictable product. But Christian unity is neither the underlying principle nor the major objective of this movement.

This mistaken view has led to many prophecies that the movement will become "just another denomination, as all similar movements have in the past." There are no similar movements in the past. The supposed similarity vanishes before analysis and comparison.

Christian unity movements of the past have usually started, either as movements within some one denomination, or as "come-outer" movements of withdrawal from some denomination. The community church movement neither started within a denomination, nor does it seek to draw people out of denominations. It often combines local congregations without disturbing the denominational status of any individual.

Christian unity movements of the past have ordained their own clergy. This movement uses the clergy of any and all denominations, and encourages (and in some instances, requires) them to retain denominational connections.

Christian unity movements of the past have invariably used some theological dogma as a rallying

cry; and this dogma—whether oral or written—is the nucleus about which the movement has usually crystallized into a denomination. The community church movement has no dogma. Matters of belief in every instance depend upon the theological complexion of the local community and are not uniform within it.

Christian unity movements of the past which have crystallized into denominations, have always put forth some interpretation of the New Testament church as a divinely given basis of organization. Even if they interpreted the New Testament as teaching local autonomy, they agreed upon the matter. There is and can be no such agreement among the community churches. Those of the denominational type conform to the government and ritual of the denomination with which they are affiliated. The federated type provides a dual or multiform government to conserve the practices of the combining units. And the undenominational churches have an actual variety in forms and usage bewildering to contemplate.

It has been averred that the Community Church Workers of the U. S. A., are in effect, the nucleus of the new denomination which is presumably to grow out of this movement. But this organization acts only as a volunteer service agency to promote the idea and to answer certain needs of communities which may wish to call upon it. It belongs in the same category as "Community Service, Inc.", and

the "Community Center Association," and serves a similar purpose, but covers the religious phase of community organization. Community churches have no voice in its affairs, the membership being limited to individuals, and open to anyone interested enough to pay \$5.00 or more as an annual contribution to support the service. Among these members one finds ministers of many denominations, individuals who belong to denominational churches of the old order, individual members of community churches, a few who belong to no church, and even two or three denominational secretaries. One year a Catholic priest was enrolled as an annual member. All these members retain their other religious affiliations, just as they do when they join the Playground and Recreation Association or the Fellowship for a Christian Social Order.

Thus we can find no resemblance between this movement and the Christian unity movements of the past.

Not even organic local union is an essential of the community church principle. In the small community, for example, units may federate and yet maintain their separate identities for certain purposes. Unorganized groups in the active membership of an undenominational church may maintain their denominational standing by means of dual membership or otherwise. And minorities which will not amalgamate, may be identified with the community organization and yet hold separate worship at hours

not conflicting with the larger community program.

The consolidation of local churches is not, then, the end and aim, even when churches do consolidate. It is a means to an end. One may have consolidated churches without having a community church. One may have a community church without church consolidation.

The aim of this movement is the community organization of religion. Its significance lies in the new principle which, consciously or unconsciously, it is propagating—the principle that the church *is* the community in spiritual action, functioning for spiritual ends. When we speak of a community church we are not talking of a distinctive form, as when we speak of a Methodist or a Baptist church; we designate not an officered group so much as a unified functioning. Just as, when we speak of social organization, we are not talking of lodges and clubs, *per se*, but of a social coherence which expresses itself in habits, programs, reactions, and interrelations.

The community church concept is that of helping the whole community to function coherently for the highest ethical and spiritual good. With this conception, one can no longer think of the church as one organization among several or many competing for the time of the people. The Church *is* the community functioning religiously. Wherever and whenever any group in the community comes to religious expression, there is the church at work. It may be a

group of girls trying to live out their Wohelo ideals, or an assembly at worship, or a spirit of reverence for mutual rights developed upon the field of play.

The community church requires and will develop an inclusive attitude and inclusive habits of mind, speech, and action. The Presbyterian pastor of the only church in Brownsville would readily admit that the good Baptists, Methodists and Disciples families living there are members of the "church universal." But does he think of them as members of the church of Brownsville? How can they be members of the whole church—the church universal—and yet not belong to the local part of it? These people are as much members of the church of Brownsville as are the Presbyterians whose names are enrolled on the only local church roster. But the Presbyterian pastor is not community-minded, and his habits of thought, speech, and action, omit from the church that is in Brownsville all save those on his roster and payroll.

This same pastor regards as virtual members of *his* church the babies and children of all Presbyterian families. Then why not count, in the potential membership of the church that is in Brownsville, the babies and children of all Christian parents of whatever denomination, living or dead? This would probably include most of the community, if one did not draw too close an age limit around the word children.

Thinking of the community as the basis of organization is not such a radical procedure, after all. And if one has read in the parable of the prodigal son the thought that all men are children of the Heavenly Father, a community basis for the organization of religion should seem an inevitable corollary of the Fatherhood of God.

When the center of organization is not a group, but the community, the minister is not the pastor of "our church," he is the pastor of the community. The officers are the spiritual and administrative representatives of the community. This has already led to community programs of religious education, recreation, and worship. It will lead further. The logic of it is, circles and degrees of fellowship, in which all who seek the higher life and participate in any form of unselfish service are recognized as in some sense "belonging." There will always be the inmost circle of those who have gained the great spiritual experience of forgiveness and fellowship with Jesus. And this will be the highest form of identification with the community religious life. But not the only form.

As this inclusive attitude becomes habitual, the suffrage on religious matters of community concern—including election of church officers—will be open to all whose interest in the larger welfare of the community is great enough for them to be actively identified with any working group looking toward that end. Quite aside from its being in harmony with

the community church principle, such a plan affords the best possible encouragement to every individual to seek the closer fellowship and the richer experience.

In these directions lies the significance of the community church for the future. The true community church-man conceives of the church as the community functioning for spiritual ends, and tries to shape organizations, groupings, and programs to harmonize with this conception; then, to include every individual in the actual spiritual functioning of the community life. This is, in fact, a new evangelism. One that breaks down old barriers, destroys artificial separations, and gives practical meaning to the Fatherhood of God, the brotherhood of man, and the democratic spirit in religion. One large enough for the age of cooperation in which we live.

Physical barriers have been broken down. Time and space have been all but annihilated, so that the world is now one big neighborhood. Education and the diffusion of knowledge have compelled the spirit of dogmatism to give way before the spirit of inquiry. As seekers after truth we may all work together, and a larger measure of spiritual power will be ours when we do. The community church is a child of its age. All the forces of social progress fight on its side. It has not sprung from propaganda, is not forced forward by great leadership, and is frankly experimental in its many local forms and programs. By trial and error it is making its way.

God is with it as he is with all progress. It is the spiritual expression of all the forces of social togetherness of our day. It fits the age like a garment, and it will prevail.

Appendix

DOCUMENTS AND FORMS

I. NAMES

Community churches have sprung up under a great variety of names. Some of these names are confusing, some embarrassing to the professed program of the church, some are highly appropriate. The choice of a name is not unimportant.

The least variation appears to be found in the usage of the denominational type of churches. The most frequent usage is to add the term community to the denominational name, as, Presbyterian Community Church, Baptist Community Church, and so forth.

A greater variation is found in the usage of undenominational churches. Many of the older ones are known simply as the Union Church of Localsville. Some have revised their earlier constitutions and added a word to their names, calling themselves Union Community. In some villages an undenominational church is known only by the name of the village, as the Rushville Church, or the Church of Rushville. Special names seem to be more common among city and suburban community churches of this type. Thus we find St. Paul's Union Church, Grace Chapel, the Good Samaritan Church. Other undenominational churches are called variously, the

All-Denominational Church, United Protestant Church, and Federated Church. The last mentioned is exceedingly confusing. The purpose is to indicate a federation of individuals, but the general usage of this term to designate a federation of congregations, makes its employment in this connection undesirable.

Federated churches are most commonly known by that name. Sometimes the official title states in parenthesis the denominational units combined in the merger, as Federated Church (Disciples-Presbyterian). Sometimes the term community is added to the title, Federated Community Church. Some federated churches call themselves Associated Churches, or United Church (or Churches). A few have in their title only the names of the units, as the Presbyterian-Baptist Church of Fayetteville.

2. CONSTITUTIONS

Denominational Church Constitutions. The constitution of a denominational community church is largely determined by the forms and requirements of the denomination to which it belongs. One feature needs to be added, and that is provision for an associate, affiliate, or community membership, composed of those persons who wish to join the local congregation without surrendering former denominational allegiance or without becoming identified with the denomination represented by the main body of the community church. This is usually done

by action of the congregation or official board. As an example we cite here the action taken by the session of a Presbyterian church upon expanding its membership privileges:

ASSOCIATE MEMBERS

"1. Persons residing within the bounds of the community may, upon giving evidence of their present membership in good standing in any evangelical denomination and pledging themselves to seek the spiritual welfare of this community and the peace and purity of this church, be enrolled as members of the Community Presbyterian Church. Such membership does not change their present denominational connections, but merely unites them for worship and service with this congregation.

"2. All persons desiring to take upon themselves the obligations of the Christian life, but not wishing to unite with the Presbyterian denomination, may be received also upon confession of their personal faith in Jesus Christ and loyalty to his ideals of life and service by whatever mode of baptism they shall choose; and, when dismissed, may be given letters to any church of their choice;

"3. Provided, that all such persons of both classifications shall be enrolled on a community membership roll, and known as associate members.

"4. Associate members have full voting rights in the congregation except in such matters as may affect the relation of the Presbyterian society proper to its denomination. For every ten associate members the congregation shall elect one such mem-

ber to serve with the session as an official board for the management of all congregational affairs. The term of office of such board members shall be one year, subject to re-election in regular annual meeting of the congregation."

Many denominational community churches make no provision for associate members to hold office on the official board. This church did, and the feature is a desirable one. Such official board members have a vote only on local matters. When matters of purely denominational concern are considered they withdraw from the meeting, or sit in an advisory capacity.

Federated Church Constitutions. Constitutions of federated churches vary. For this reason there is no typical constitution. Most federated churches in Massachusetts have used, with occasional modification, the constitution devised and circulated under auspices of the Massachusetts State Federation of Churches. Some federated churches in Ohio have also followed forms recommended by the Ohio Council of Churches. In the past few years a considerable number of new churches have made use of constitutions published in the Handbook of the Community Church Movement, compiled by the author, available copies of which are now exhausted. In general, however, it may be said that federating congregations have worked out their own forms. This has had the advantage of enabling them to

concentrate upon local conditions, and to meet contingencies peculiar to the local situation. The disadvantage is that some important or desirable provisions are usually omitted, and the congregation may suffer later handicap, or become involved in an embarrassing situation which might have been avoided had constitutional provisions been made to meet such a case.

Our plan shall be to give a constitution which we consider one of the best, and append to various sections of it editorial notes commenting upon variations which have been found desirable by other federated churches.

PREAMBLE

Realizing the great opportunity for more efficient work in our community and desiring to unite our forces in a common fellowship of love, worship, and service, we, the members of the Methodist Episcopal and Presbyterian Churches of -----, do hereby agree to federate and to work together for the common good of all, pledging our loyalty to Jesus Christ, and committing ourselves in all sincerity to a constructive program of community and world service.

OBJECT

To promote a closer bond of fellowship among the Christian people of the community.

To provide a common place of worship for Christians of all denominations.

To concentrate Christian efforts and forces now divided by denominational lines.

To conserve the resources of the field by eliminating the necessity of maintaining two Protestant church organizations therein.

To make possible the securing of a much needed resident pastor, who can enter the field unhampered by denominational competition and encouraged by the support of a united body of Christian people.

NAME

The name of this church shall be The United Church of -----

PROPERTY

The status of the property now owned by the churches federating shall not in any way be affected by this federation. It is hereby agreed that the United Church shall be granted the free use of all properties and equipment now owned by both churches. The United Church shall become responsible for the upkeep of all properties, for the payment of all debts, interest, insurance premiums, taxes, and other liens accruing against the properties, during the federation. If any income accrues from the properties, it shall be devoted to the use of the United Church. No property belonging to either church shall be disposed of except after a vote of the respective churches, and the consent of the proper representatives of the general organizations to which they belong.

Title to any permanent additions to the buildings or equipment of either church shall rest in the name

of the denomination owning the property to which the additions have been made; provided, however, that in case of dissolution, the cost of such addition shall represent a joint asset and it shall be incumbent on the church directly benefited by the additions to pay to the other church, party to the federation, an amount representing that church's interest therein, joint usage and depreciation being considered factors in such settlement.

BENEVOLENCES

The subscriptions for the general benevolences of the denominations entering into this union shall be taken and credited to the causes of the respective churches and sent to the proper authorities. The budget shall include one or more interdenominational benevolences in harmony with the interdenominational spirit of this federation.

MEMBERSHIP

All members in regular standing in the churches entering into this federation shall be members of the United Church. Anyone may become a member of the United Church by joining either one of the churches entering into this federation under the rules and regulations provided for the reception of members in these respective denominations.

Anyone having a letter from another evangelical church, and not desiring to join either the Methodist or Presbyterian Church within this union, may be admitted to membership in the United Church and enrolled on a community membership roll. The

same privilege is extended to those who wish to join on profession of faith.

Editorial Comment: Some federated churches require that all members shall be actively connected with one of the denominational units forming the federation. This necessarily limits both the membership and the community influence of the organization.

AUXILIARY ORGANIZATIONS

All affiliated organizations of each church shall unite, except the Women's Missionary Societies, and they may if they prefer to do so.

LENGTH OF TIME OF FEDERATION

The federation shall continue until the legal questions in regard to the properties of both churches have been settled and the Superior Bodies of each church have relinquished all rights and claims to said properties, after which action a complete consolidation shall take place, either under auspices of some third denomination or without denominational auspices, as may at that time be decided.

Editorial Comment: The last part of this section is unusual and sometimes would be inadvisable. But provision for a future closer relationship is more desirable than a provision for the discontinuance of the federation after a six or twelve month's trial at the option of either party. The latter provision invites interference from denominational officials who may not approve wholly of the arrangement. It also puts everyone in a state of mind to look for

flaws, and magnify them. By definitely looking toward a permanent union, either undenominational or denominational, the way is prepared for the most earnest attempts to adjust all small matters, instead of allowing them to become sources of discontent.

PASTOR

The pastor shall be one who is vitally interested in the promotion of community programs in accordance with the aims and purposes of the United Church. He shall be under obligation to attend the denominational meetings of both churches, in order that he may be able to understand and be able to promote the general denominational interests. All the expenses connected with the attendance of such meetings shall be paid out of the treasury of the United Church. He shall be chosen from some other Protestant denomination than the two entering the federation.

The pastor shall be elected by a vote of the congregation of the United Church, at a meeting announced for that purpose on two Sundays previous to said meeting. A vote of at least two-thirds of those present and voting shall be necessary to constitute a call.

Editorial Comment: Among variations found in the methods of pulpit supply are: (a) Provision that the pastor shall be chosen alternately from the denominations represented in the united congregation; (b) that he shall be chosen strictly on merit, without reference to his denomination, so long as he

is in good standing in some regularly organized body. The first of these two arrangements makes for short pastorates, and perpetuates the sense of dividedness.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Until such time as growth and conditions develop further needs, the administration of the United Church shall be in the hands of a Board of Directors consisting of four members from each denominational unit.

The Board shall elect a moderator, secretary, and treasurer, who may or may not be members of the Board. Six members shall constitute a quorum for the transaction of business. The Board shall organize the necessary committees to carry on the work of the United Church in an efficient manner.

REGULAR BUSINESS

Regular business meetings of the United Church shall be held three times each year during the first full weeks of January, May, September. The annual meeting shall be held the first full week in November. At this time the reports of all committees and officers shall be presented and the new Board of Directors elected. Special business meetings shall be called by the pastor, the Board of Directors, or upon the written request of any seven members, notice having been read at two successive Sunday morning services prior to such meeting. Twenty shall constitute a quorum.

AMENDMENTS

This agreement may be altered or amended by a two-thirds vote of each congregation present and

voting, notice having been given in writing, and the proposed amendments read at two successive Sunday morning services. This compact shall not become binding until ratified by a two-thirds vote of the joining congregations.

The local situation may often dictate the expediency of additional sections or clauses not found in the example studied above. Some of these may best be cared for in by-laws, rather than embodied in the constitution proper.

When two or more houses of worship, in usable condition, are available for the federating units, it is wise to state in the by-laws the agreement concerning their use. The usual plan is to designate the most desirable building for worship and use the other one for religious education or remodel it for a community house. Or, one of the buildings may be sold, and the proceeds used for improvements or the erection of additional facilities.

When the federated units are not the only Protestant denominations organized in the community, it is desirable to leave the way open for the remaining ones to federate later, in case they can not be persuaded to do so at the time of the original merger. The following is taken from the articles of incorporation of a church in the State of Washington:

“When any religious denomination, by a majority vote of its members, expresses a willingness and a

desire to federate with this organization, it shall make application through its secretary, to the secretary of this organization, for membership, and furnish a list of its members in good standing. This application and list of members shall be submitted to the members of The Federated Church at a regular meeting or at a special meeting called for the purpose of considering the application, and when a majority of the members present vote in favor of the application, said applicant shall become federated with this organization, and its members be entitled to all the rights, privileges, and duties belonging to the members of The Federated Church of-----."

Undenominational Church Constitutions. A greater variety is found in the constitutional provisions of undenominational churches than in any others. Such churches have greater freedom from precedent, and have arisen in a greater variety of ways than federated or denominational community churches.

For these reasons it would be impossible to set forth here any constitution as typical. Communities forming an undenominational church on the basis of two or more uniting denominational units may receive much help from studying the federated church constitution above, since they must deal with some of the same problems of property and group adjustment. The constitution given below grew out of a simpler situation and united people as individuals instead of denominational groups:

ARTICLES OF AGREEMENT

Preamble: We, the people of ----- community in order to better fulfill our common mission to the community, to better conserve the resources of the Kingdom of God, to promote the unity of his people for which Christ prayed, to promote Christian education, and to be the instruments in the building of Christian character do hereby adopt the following articles of agreement and constitute ourselves the Community Church of -----.

ARTICLE I. PURPOSE

We hereby agree to form and act as one congregation for all purposes of work and worship.

ARTICLE II. MEMBERSHIP

Section 1. *Who Eligible.* All persons who are in sympathy with the character and purpose of this church are cordially welcome to its fellowship; and loyalty to God and Christ, devotion to the highest good of men, and allegiance to this church are the only conditions requisite for membership.

Section 2. *Classes of Members.* There shall be two classes of members, regular members and associate members.

The regular members shall consist of those persons who unite with this church by baptism, by letter of dismission from some other church, or on their Christian experience.

The associate members shall consist of those persons who remain members of churches elsewhere,

but who unite with this church for the purpose of associating and worshipping with its members while residing in this community.

The associate members may hold church offices and vote at church meetings.

ARTICLE III.

Section 1. *Annual Meeting.* The annual meeting of the church shall be held -----, at the call of the Secretary of the Church Council. Special meetings may be called by the Secretary or Pastor.

Section 2. At the annual meetings reports for the year shall be made by the pastor, treasurer, Sunday-school superintendent, president of the young people's organization, the president of the ladies' organization, and the director of the community house.

Section 3. At this meeting three members of the church shall be elected by ballot to serve for one year on the Church Council.

Section 4. All members of the church shall have a vote at the annual meeting and at all other meetings of the church.

Section 5. The chairman of the Church Council shall act as chairman of the annual meeting and the secretary of the Council shall act as secretary of the annual meeting.

ARTICLE IV.

Section 1. *Church Council.* The three members elected at the annual meeting, together with the pastor, Sunday-school superintendent, director of

the community house, president of the young people's organization and the president of the ladies' organization shall be known as the Church Council.

Section 2. The pastor will act as chairman of the Council. The secretary-treasurer elected by the Council will also act as secretary-treasurer of the Church.

Section 3. No person shall hold office in the church who is not a member of the same.

Section 4. The duties of the Council shall be those of the governing body of the church:

(a) The engaging of a pastor, and any other paid workers, upon approval by a two-thirds vote of all the members of the church present at the annual meeting or at a special meeting called for this purpose.

(b) The Church Council shall determine upon a yearly budget, see to the collection of the amounts necessary, and expend the same through the treasurer in the interest of the religious welfare of the community.

(c) The Council shall determine the amount and authorize the payment of the pastor's salary.

(d) The treasurer shall be responsible for all church funds and shall make a monthly report to the Council and a yearly report to the annual church meeting.

(e) Meetings of the Council shall be held each month at a time to be determined at the first meeting.

(f) The Council shall be responsible for the spiritual upbuilding of the community.

ARTICLE V.

Section 1. *The Pastor.* The pastor shall preferably be an ordained minister in good standing in a generally recognized denomination. He shall hold his office without time limitation; but either church or pastor may terminate the relation upon sixty days written notice of such intention.

ARTICLE VI.

Section 1. One-third of the regular membership shall constitute a quorum at the annual church meeting or at any called meeting of the church. The Council may call a special meeting of the congregation on one week's notice by public or printed announcement, at any time it may be considered advisable.

ARTICLE VII

Amendments to the Constitution may be presented in writing to any annual or called meeting of the church. If they receive a two-thirds vote by ballot of the members present, they shall become a part of the Constitution.

Editorial Comment: Some constitutions admit to associate membership all residents of the community who subscribe to the church budget, and who are not enrolled as regular members. Terms of admission to regular membership are sometimes made to include registration for service in some department of the church's fellowship and work.

Some undenominational churches (and some denominational community churches as well) find in their communities minority groups unwilling to merge fully with the congregation in worship or in the observance of ordinances. For instance, a small Episcopalian group may desire a high church service. The community church is wise which makes provision for all such groups. This may be done by the addition of by-laws to the constitution, providing for their affiliation and for their use of the church property or any part of it in separate services at stated intervals, not interfering with the other services of the church. Similar provision should also be made for any foreign language group.

Such arrangements have three effects: they do justice to minorities; they eliminate all reason for the maintenance and growth of competitive churches; and they tend to unify the younger generation so as to erase lines of distinction, and result in a more closely amalgamated community of religious interest in the years to come. Such groups may not exist in the community at the time the church is organized. The official board and pastor should study changes in local population and be aware of the latter rise or appearance of any such groups, bringing this to the attention of the congregation and making the proper provisions to serve them.

3. COVENANTS AND STATEMENTS OF PURPOSE

The denominational units or groups within a community church have creeds conforming to the

usage of their denomination. But the community church as such has no creed. It has a working covenant or a statement of purpose. These are the dynamic expression of conviction cast not into the form "I believe," but into the form "I purpose." This is a fundamental contribution which community churches are making to the expression of Christian thought. The creed which calls for consent to a theory, theology, or philosophical point of view is not useful in our dynamic age. But convictions stated in terms of a uniting purpose or a life purpose, meet the vital needs of the age.

The covenant below is that of an Ohio community church. It sums up its acceptance of the historic creed of the church universal in the first paragraph, and proceeds to a purposive statement in the next three paragraphs:

CHURCH COVENANT

We do hereby set forth the principles of the Christian Faith as commonly held among us, believing that "other foundations can no man lay than is laid, which is Jesus Christ."

It shall be our aim to bring joy to little children; instruction and high ideals to youth; inspiration to men and women in the midst of life; to labor together for the betterment of mankind.

Our fellowship shall not be dependent upon identity of theological opinion; nor of outward circumstances; nor of denominational name; but shall

grow from a common loyalty to Jesus Christ; a common passion to serve the world; a common purpose to do justly, to love kindness, and to walk humbly with God.

Our ideal is a church of the open mind, the warm heart, the aspiring soul, the social vision, and the uplifted Christ.

4. CERTIFICATES OF MEMBERSHIP

It is advisable for churches with an associate membership feature to give a certificate, showing the member exactly what privileges are offered to him. A denominational community church in Connecticut has the following form of certificate:

CERTIFICATE OF ASSOCIATE MEMBERSHIP

in United Church, -----

This Certifies that -----
 a member of ----- Church,
 of -----
 is, without any change of church relationship, enrolled as an Associate Member of United Church, -----, and as such is entitled, during his residence with us, to all the social, spiritual, and other privileges of full membership, except only a vote on questions pertaining to the Constitution and Creed of this Church.

Pastor

Clerk

Chairman Prudential Com.

A form for use with those joining on confession of faith, but unwilling to be enrolled with any denominational unit represented in a church of federated or denominational type, reads as follows:

CERTIFICATE OF AFFILIATE MEMEBRSHIP

This is to certify

that _____
 having previously confessed Christ and received Christian baptism, is, without change of private beliefs or convictions, enrolled as an

Affiliate Member of the

_____ Church
 and is entitled to full participation and privileges in its church and Sunday-school affairs, including voting with others on all local church questions, acting on committees, and holding any office not requiring the taking of denominational vows; also representing the church in assemblies, conferences, and conventions, except those which are denominational.

Signed _____

Date _____ 19__ *Membership Com.*

In all such forms the language should be dignified and stately, but the terminology of the historic

creeds should be avoided for several reasons: First, they breathe the atmosphere of a philosophy having no present significance. Second, they employ terms to which are attached theological distinctions; these are to be avoided in any document used by an inclusive church. Third, the original meanings of many of the words in the old creeds have changed, so that the unscholarly individual of today attaches to them a meaning which they were not intended to have. And, finally, every age has the right and the duty of expressing its living convictions in a living form.

5. INCORPORATION

The question is often raised whether a community church should incorporate as a religious society. The editor asked the legal opinion of Rev. W. A. Cutler, who for a number of years was a practicing lawyer in Toledo, Ohio, and who has made a careful study of this question. His opinion is given as follows:

“A denominational community church should not incorporate. Its denominational incorporation is sufficient. It can hold property in trust. A declaration of trust may be made binding upon the denominational corporation and at the same time protect vested funds and the community. If there were any question about it, either in law or in the opinions of the people, such properties, bequests, vested funds,

etc., could be turned over to an individual as trustee or to some trust company for certain specific community purposes.

"A federated church should not incorporate. Denominational churches are incorporated under special statutes of the several states to conserve specific religious tenets and forms of ecclesiastical organization. Therefore a further controlling corporation would tend to defeat the intent of the original incorporation in some instances, and would not hold in law. The only safe way is to form a voluntary organization out of the various corporate units, and in the preamble or at the very outset make a declaration that the federation maintains the legal entity and denominational loyalty of its constituent units according to law. As to bequests and community properties, the procedure is as indicated for the denominational community church.

"The undenominational church must needs incorporate if it holds property and does business."

The editor need only add that procedure for the incorporation of an undenominational church is very simple in almost every state, and the fees for incorporation are usually nominal.

6. SURVEY SCHEDULES

Every community church needs a survey secretary, or a committee on surveys. It is necessary to keep close to community life and to changing needs. The only way to do this accurately is to make an

annual social-religious survey, including in it every family and individual in the community. After the first one is made, it needs to be kept up to date by recording changes and adding new information. The reproduction of schedules here may be useful. Those chosen are in use in a New York hamlet community, and were prepared to meet the local situation. There is a file of family data, and another file of individual data. The data sheets are regular 8½ in. by 11 in. size, and letter files instead of card indexes are used. This permits putting more data on a sheet. The two forms are reproduced below.

FAMILY DATA SHEET

Family-----Nationality-----Map No.---

	Sex	Age	Work	School Grade	Sect	Lodges	Community Hall Act.	H'lth	Men- tality
Father	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----
Mother	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----
Child 1	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----
2	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----
3	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----
4	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----
5	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----

Family recreation in the home-----

Interest in music-----How manifested-----

Other home recreation-----

Family recreation outside of home-----

Movie fans?-----Preferred type of entertainment-----

Other outside recreation-----

Interested in what type of reading-----

Books-----

Magazines-----

Papers-----

Community Paper-----

Length of residence in community-----

Travel experience-----

General Standards-----

Household conveniences-----

-----Car-----Bath-----

Buildings-----Home owned-----

Farming methods-----

Reputation (moral, etc.)-----

Other standards-----

Neighboring families having blood relationship.....
.....
.....
Father and mother related?.....
Problems amenable to influence of community work.....
.....
Part taken in local conflicts.....
.....
Miscellaneous data and discussion.....
.....

INDIVIDUAL DATA SHEET

Family..... Individual.....
Sex..... Age..... Work.....
Attitude toward community work.....
Church or Sunday school attendant.....
Interested in what kind of social activities.....
..... Dance—Square.....
..... Round.....
Potential leader in.....
Member of choir, orchestra, or other organization.....
..... Record of participation in dramatics, etc;.....
.....
Health.....
Social minded or individualistic.....
.....
General personality and character.....
.....
Standing in community afforded by reputation.....
.....
Miscellaneous.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

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AUTHOR

Piper, D.R.

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Community churches

DATE
LOANED

BORROWER'S NAME

DATE
RETURNED

RESERVE

10/12/48

11/12/48

2/12/50

4/19/50

8-9

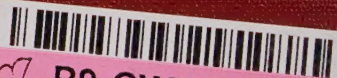
J. Bradshaw

Renewed

M. C.

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